

P A R T

III

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After the Conquest



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I. Administration of the Arabic World: from Tribalism to the Umayyad Caliphate

I.1. Pre-Muslim Power Structures in the Arabian Peninsula

The process that drove the creation of the Arab state was determined by the tough desert environment of the Arabian Peninsula¹. The life of nomads in its central region was a struggle for survival. A slightly better situation was to

¹ I.A. Al-Aḍawī, *An-Nuzum al-islamiyya*, Cairo 1972, pp. 65–69, 75–85.

be found with the inhabitants of South Arabia, living both in rural and urban areas with close proximity to ports: important centres of trade with the Far East². It was the part of Arabia where, relatively early, state organisations emerged. What triggered this process was the need to organise cooperation in order to maintain the dam of Ma'rib. Another factor facilitating unification was the necessity of ensuring control over trade routes. However, the realisation of these objectives was difficult for the inhabitants of south Arabia, which is demonstrated by the destruction of the irrigation system, a result of insufficient maintenance. Following a huge flood, the great dam of Ma'rib was damaged³ and a process of large-scale migration of the local population occurred. At the time when the state structures were weakened, this part of the Arabian Peninsula was under Ethiopian control. Even prior to this, communities of the region were subject to cultural infiltration from the older, well-developed cultures of Ethiopia and Persia. There were also religious reasons for the Abyssinian intervention in the area, which is described in detail in another chapter of this book⁴.

On the remaining territories of the Arabian Peninsula the autonomy of particular tribes resulted not only in the lack of a single centre of power, but also a transience and impermanence of alliances between them. Because of this, the administrative institutions created by the Arabs in the pre-Muslim period were based on tribal and clan structures.

The principal leader – responsible for looking after a tribe's interests – was a phylarch (a Greek term is used in this context, since that is how Roman and later Byzantine authors wrote about tribal leaders)⁵. His duty was to prepare his tribe to take military actions as required by tradition and the economic situation.

The position of a phylarch was not hereditary: instead the leader was selected by the tribal council (*madjlis al-kabila*), consisting of representatives of the families of the tribe. The title was awarded for life and could only be divested in the event

² More about the subject of rivalry between tribal groups from the North and South can be found in: R. Marín-Guzmán, *Arab Tribes, the Umayyad Dynasty, and the 'Abasid Revolution*, *AJISS* 21.4, 2004, pp. 58–59.

³ W.W. Müller, *Mārib*, [in:] *EI*, vol. VI, pp. 559–567.

⁴ See the chapter *Difficult Neighbours. Enemies, Partners, Allies* by Teresa Wolińska.

⁵ Cf. P. Mayerson, *The Use of the Term Phylarchos in the Roman-Byzantine East*, *ZPE* 88, 1991, pp. 291–295. The scholar believes that the term *phylarch* was used in a very broad meaning, not only with reference to leaders of tribes allied with Byzantium. I. Shalhîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century*, Washington 1984, p. 516; idem, *Rome and the Arabs. A Prolegomenon to the Study of Byzantium and the Arabs*, Washington 1984, p. 31; Th. Brüggemann, *Römische Verwaltung im nomadischen Umfeld. Ethnarchen, Phylarchen und Strategen in der Provinz Arabia vom 1. bis ins 3. Jahrhundert*, [in:] *Verwaltete Nomaden – Mobile Viehzüchter und Dienstleister zwischen Autonomie und staatlicher Anbindung*, ed. K. Franz, Halle 2007, pp. 45–77.

of a serious defeat. The duties of a phylarch were not limited to military action, but were also concerned with foreign policy (forming and breaking alliances), providing the tribe with suitable economic conditions and wielding judicial power. Such features as wisdom, pride, consequence, honesty, eloquence, courage, sense of justice, hospitality and generosity were expected of the leader. He had to distinguish himself as kind, caring, clever, diplomatic and clear-minded⁶.

In some tribes the leader was called *emir*, which was supposed to stress his military capabilities. Other tribes preferred the title *sayyid* ("master"). Yet another group of tribes adopted the title *shayh* ("the elder"), pointing to the leader's wisdom, knowledge and experience. The word '*arrab* ("carer") highlighted his predisposition to provide safety to the whole tribe. To recapitulate, the tribal title of a leader was supposed to reflect ambition and temperament, both of the ruler and the tribe he lead⁷.

The status of the head of a tribe was emphasised by certain external signs. The tent of the phylarch was different from the others. It was of red fabric, and pitched on the highest point of the terrain, while an ever-burning fire made it easy to find. In front of the phylarch's quarters, dogs were kept, in order to raise alarm whenever a stranger approached.

Although the majority of tribes were autonomous, in some areas tribes created supratribal unions as of a kind of federation, as exemplified by groups united under the leadership of the Kindites (Banū Kinda) in central Arabia⁸. Across various historical periods certain groups of Arabs – the Nabataeans, Palmyrenes, Ghassānids and the Lakhmids – gained control over lands situated on the border with Byzantium. Thus, they were under the influence of neighbouring foreign Empires: the Romans/Byzantines and others. None of these powers were eager to welcome a strong nation on the Arabian Peninsula. On the other hand, though, no one among them ever managed to dominate the Arabian Peninsula (this despite the existence of a land known as *Arabia Petraea* under Roman and Oman control, which accepted the authority of Persia for some time).

In the process of creating supratribal structures, cities were an important factor. The first were built on caravan trails – to be more precise, in places where caravans made an extended stop. An example of such a city was Mecca⁹. In the first

⁶ I.A. Al-Aḍawī, *An-Nuzum...*, pp. 9–19; H. Baḍawī, *Eisagōgē stēn istoria toth islamikou kosmou*, vol. I, Thessalonikē 2003, pp. 92–93.

⁷ M. Gaudetroy-Demombynes, *Les institutions musulmanes*, Paris 1950, pp. 146–147.

⁸ I.A. Al-Aḍawī, *An-Nuzum...*, pp. 25–27, 67; H. Baḍawī, *Eisagōgē...*, vol. II, Thessalonikē 2010, pp. 158–171.

⁹ Ibn Hishām, pp. 96, 119, 131, 132, 133, 137, 138, 140 (ed. M.K. Harras); Mas'ūdī, vol. I, pp. 262–263, 264, 269; I. Shāhīd, *Byzantium and Arabs in the Fifth Century*,

half of the fifth century the city became the residence of ʔuṣayy, progenitor of the ʔuraysh tribe. At first glance the choice was not obvious. Mecca was located in Al-Ḥidjāz, in a relatively infertile region at the base of a mountain. One motivation for ʔuṣayy to settle there was, undoubtedly, the presence of an important caravan trail from Yemen to the Mediterranean Sea running through this area. Therefore the location of Mecca had a strategic character, from an economic perspective. From the first moments of its existence Mecca was in conflict with its neighbours from the north and from the south, which was caused, at least in part, by competition over trade. This left its mark on the relations between Mecca and the Jewish tribes of Yathrib (later Medina). This urban centre was a rival of Mecca but its importance gradually declined as Mecca developed, although its role in trade remained significant. Yathrib, inhabited by various Arab and Jewish tribes, was a place of coexistence for many regional ethnic groups¹⁰.

It is worth devoting a passage of this chapter to the way in which Mecca was governed, as the models created then were employed later in the Caliphate. ʔuṣayy ruled the city in an authoritarian manner with the assistance of a council called the *al-māla* (الملا)¹¹. It consisted of representatives of four districts, into which the city had been divided soon after the ʔuraysh gained control over it¹². ʔuṣayy granted certain privileges to selected families, whose members would later monopolise trade¹³. Their descendants would become rulers of the Arab world. Among them we must list Hashimite (Hāshimites) Muḥammad (610–632), ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (656–661), Umayyad Mu‘āwīya (660–661), Abbasid Abū al-‘Abbās ‘Abdu’līlāh Al-Saffāḥ (750–754) and Fatimid ‘Abdallāh al-Mahdī (909–934).

1.2. The Influence of Islam: from a Religious Community to the Muslim State

For the above-described approach to ruling a city, the birth of the new religion emerged as a challenge. Spiritual bonds were more important for believers gathered around Muḥammad than were their connections with Mecca. When

Washington 1989, pp. 332–350; G. Zidan, *Al-Arab kabl al-islam*, Cairo n.d., pp. 178–181, 275–280; W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad. Prophet and Statesman*, Oxford 1975, pp. 7–13; I. A. Al-Aḍawī, *Al-Nuzum...*, pp. 54–61.

¹⁰ R. B. Winder, *Al-Madīna*, [in:] *EI*, vol. V, pp. 994–1007.

¹¹ Ibn Hishām, vol. I, pp. 99, 104, 107; Mas‘ūdī, vol. I, p. 269; I. A. Al-Aḍawī, *An-Nuzum...*, pp. 60–65.

¹² *Ibidem*, pp. 60–65.

¹³ Ibn Hishām, vol. I, p. 99, 107; I. A. Al-Aḍawī, *An-Nuzum...*, pp. 63–65.

Muḥammad stayed in Mecca, the *umma* (أمة) was a monoethnic (Arab) community, but it consisted of many tribes. Good relations between members of *umma*, the safety provided through mutual aid, and the sense of justice resulting from partial redistribution of goods seemed to be sufficient elements to encourage conversion to the new religion. Harmonious coexistence between the members of the community was viewed as a sign of God's blessing¹⁴. Initially, however, many citizens of Mecca were not interested in the teaching of Muḥammad. The Prophet's sermons attracted only a small part of the local community – about seventy families – mostly of little prominence. The religious prohibition on profiteering had no effect on the biggest merchants in the city; these, at the beginning, paid no attention to the new faith, which was spreading among less privileged classes of the society.

Rigorous criticism of economic and social customs led to the first open conflict between the Muslim community and Meccan elites in 616 AD¹⁵. This was seemingly connected to the sphere of doctrine, as Islam was alleged to insult the traditional faith of the Arabs. The real cause, however, was probably a perceived threat to businesses of the Quraysh, who were apprehensive about the elements of the Prophet's teachings in which he criticised accumulating riches. One of their sources of income was the arrival of pilgrims at Al-Ka'ba. The conflict between followers of the new religion and supporters of the old order reached its climax when Abū al-Ḥakam, Abū Sufyān and Suhayl ibn 'Amr became heads of the latter group. Leaders of the Quraysh noticed that Muḥammad's movement was not just one of many religious options emerging at that time, but that its aim was to take power.

The Quraysh would not countenance abandoning their ancestors' faith and they did not want any change to the existing social system, which was working to their benefit. They thought that their relatives' conversion to the new faith undermined their position and, thereby, put Muḥammad in an important position in the society of Mecca¹⁶. They were similarly worried that Muḥammad, who proclaimed himself the Messenger of God (*Rasūl Allāh*)¹⁷, would gain a significant political role and gain power¹⁸. Trying to defy the successes of Muḥammad's followers, Abū Sufyān declared a boycott of Muslims and their supporters in Mecca, where a lot of wealthy merchants still lived. This boycott also applied to

¹⁴ M. Ali, *The Religion of Islam*, Lahore 1926, pp. 6–13.

¹⁵ *Kur'ān*, 83; M. Rodinson, *Islam et capitalisme*, Paris 1966, pp. 36–44, 113–138.

¹⁶ Ibn Hishām, pp. 163, 173, 226, 248, 278, 317.

¹⁷ *Kur'ān*, 25, 1; 68, 52; 82, 27.

¹⁸ N. Sadawi, *Ad-Daula al-arabiyya al-islamijja (1–132 h/622–750 m)*, Cairo 1967, pp. 36–46; W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, Oxford 1953, p. 21.

members of the Hāshimites family, who were related to the Prophet but were not Muslims, and belonged to the ruling circle. The intention behind this decision was to force the Hāshimites to persuade Muḥammad to abandon preaching his teachings. Due to the boycott, Muslims and their relatives found themselves in a difficult situation, but this did not break the Prophet. The only choice this left was to leave Mecca. Muḥammad met with the representatives of Yathrib, who asked him for his intervention in a conflict between two tribes: Banū Aws and Banū al-Khazradj¹⁹. The religious environment of Yathrib seemed to be friendly to Muslims, due to the presence of adherents of monotheistic religions (Jewish tribes and Arabs professing Judaism), while local representatives promised Muḥammad fraternity and their protection against the mutual enemy²⁰.

When Muḥammad, together with a group of Arabs converted to Islam (called *Al-Muhādjirūn*), arrived at Yathrib, an agreement reached in Mecca between representatives of Banū Aws and Banū al-Khazradj was put to work. The deal covered issues such as providing accommodation, joint defence and brotherhood (*ta'ākhi*). It was also decided that the possessions of *Al-Muhādjirūn*, and those citizens of Medina who supported the Prophet (called *Al-Anṣār*) were to become their common property. In that way, Muḥammad replaced a tribal institution with a new one, not derived from the traditions of the tribe. Blood ties (*'aṣabiya*) were supplanted by religious bonds, which would later be regulated in the Qur'ān – *The Believers are but a single Brotherhood*²¹. The system of joint property was abolished later in the Prophet's time, when the economic situation of *Al-Muhādjirūn* improved.

The fact that Muḥammad had left Mecca had a significant influence on the *umma*, which was then in its formation. From the year 622, when Muslims arrived at Yathrib (later Medina) they were surrounded, on the one hand, by new citizens just converted to Islam, and on the other, by tribes who did not accept their faith. Thus, it turned out to be essential to determine a platform for relations between these groups. At that time, Muḥammad established a kind of alliance, joining the tribes of Medina with Meccan emigrants. This was codified in a document known as the *Card or Constitution of Medina* (*Ṣaḥīfat al-Madīna*; صحيفة المدينة) or simply *Al-Ṣaḥīfa* (الصحيفة)²². Unfortunately, we do not know

¹⁹ Ibn Hishām, vol. II, pp. 33, 35.

²⁰ A. Al-Kasem, *Diblumasijjat Muhammad*, Chartum 1971, pp. 13–15; N. Sadawi, *Al-Daula...*, pp. 46–49.

²¹ Qur'ān, 49,10: *The faithful are indeed brothers* (transl. A. Quli Qara'i); *The Believers are but a single Brotherhood* (transl. A. Yusuf Ali).

²² There is a vast literature on the subject of the so-called *Constitution of Medina*. Among the most important works, see: R.B. Serjeant, *The "Constitution of Medina"*, IQ 7.1–2, 1964,

this document in its original version, since it is preserved only in accounts given by later chroniclers, among whom the most significant is Ibn Ishāk²³.

If *umma* is to be widely understood as a cluster of city dwellers, subordinated to Muḥammad's orders, then it can be stated that the *Constitution of Medina* was a pillar of the new *umma*. In this particular period we must distinguish *umma* in the, above mentioned, broad meaning and in a narrow sense, meaning only a religious community of Muslims²⁴.

To be more precise, it must be emphasised that the *Constitution of Medina* applied to Muhājirūns, Ansars (*al-Anṣār*) and the citizens of Medina of Jewish origin, Arabs of the Jewish or Christian faith, who immigrated there from the north and south, settlers from the whole Byzantine Empire, Persians, Ethiopians, Indians, Arab followers of Zarathustra, polytheists (*al-mushrikūn*), hypocrites (*al-munāfiqūn*, i.e. those who pretended to be Muslims) and even disbelievers (*al-kāfirūn*). *Al-Ṣaḥīfa* enabled coexistence and exhorted mutual respect for different religions and tribes, which can even be shown in the Qur'ān in Sūra 109, *The Disbelievers (Al-Kāfirūn)*²⁵.

Since the Hidjra (622 AD) Muḥammad was not only a religious but also a political leader²⁶. In Yathrib he could freely introduce rules of the new religion,

pp. 3–16; M. Hamidullah, *The First Written Constitution in the World: An Important Document of the Time of the Holy Prophet*, Lahore 1975; R.B. Serjeant, *The Sunnah Jāmi'ah, Pacts with the Yathrib Jews, and the Tahrīm of Yathrib: Analysis and Translation of the Documents Comprised in the so called "Constitution of Medina"*, BSOAS 41, 1978, pp. 1–42; U. Rubin, *The "Constitution of Medina": some notes*, StI 62, 1985, pp. 5–23; G. Schaller, *Die "Gemeindeordnung von Medina" – Darstellung eines politischen Instruments. Ein Beitrag zur gegenwärtigen Fundamentalismus-Diskussion im Islam*, Augsburg 1985; A. Walker, "Constitution of Medina", [in:] *Muhammad in History, Thought, and Culture: An Encyclopedia of the Prophet of God*, vol. I, eds. C. Fitzpatrick, A. Walker, Santa Barbara 2014, pp. 113–115.

²³ Ibn Ishāk, vol. II, pp. 147–150 (ed. Cairo 1999).

²⁴ This chapter does not present the author's views on *umma* as a tribal or religious community; this discourse has been held for many years. Since the subject is unusually complicated, its full analysis cannot be included in the chapter, which is supposed to synthesise the organisation of the early Caliphate. The discussion has recently been elaborated on by M.J. Al-Faruqi (*Umma: The Orientalists and the Qur'anic Concept of Identity*, JIS 16.1, 2005, pp. 1–34), in whose text further references can be found.

²⁵ Qur'ān, 109 (transl. A. Yusuf Ali): *Say: O ye that reject Faith! I worship not that which ye worship./ Nor will ye worship that which I worship./ And I will not worship that which ye have been wont to worship/ Nor will ye worship that which I worship./ To you be your way, and to me mine.* In 'Ali Quli Qara'i's translation: *Say, O faithless ones! I do not worship what you worship,/ nor do you worship what I worship;/ nor will I worship what you have worshiped/ nor will you worship what I worship./ To you your religion, and to me my religion.*

²⁶ His contemporaries were aware of that and started dating the New Era from 622 AD. Ibn Hishām, vol. II, pp. 198–199; W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad in Mecca...*,

which led to an inevitable confrontation between the new *umma* and its allies with the Quraysh²⁷, who realised they had lost control over the course of events. Ever since their position as regional leaders started diminishing. The existence of Muslim community in Yathrib posed a threat to the monopoly the Quraysh had in controlling trade between the East and the West²⁸. Their natural reaction was to try to destroy the *umma*.

After 629/630 AD, that is, after Muḥammad took over Mecca, the economic and organisational foundations of the Muslim community (the *umma* understood as a strictly religious grouping) began to develop. The tribal alliance that supported the Prophet and treaties made earlier with citizens of Mecca were invalidated and Arab tribes were forced to convert to Islam (often only formally) and to acknowledge the authority of Muḥammad²⁹.

The Prophet changed the relations between the tribes. The model of teaching about *umma*, organised along a system different from tribal was supposed to guarantee both internal and external peace³⁰. This target was successfully achieved, to a large extent, providing safety on desert routes and suppressing conflicts, at least temporarily³¹. The rivalry between tribes from the north and from the south of the peninsula revived in the time of great conquests and moved to the areas conquered by the Arabs³².

pp. 89–93; idem, *Hidjra*, [in:] *EI*, vol. III, pp. 366–367; M. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam. Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, vol. I, Chicago 1974, pp. 20–22 (giving a description of the interconversion of the Christian solar year and the Muslim lunar year); F.A. Shamsi, *The Date of Hijrah*, *IslSt* 23, 1984, pp. 189–224, 289–323; K. Kościelniak, *Czas i historia w islamie. Kalendarz i podstawy chronologii muzułmańskiej*, Kraków 2013.

²⁷ W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad in Mecca...*, pp. 93, 102sq; H. Badawy, *Eisagōgē...*, vol. I, pp. 134–147; A. Al-Kasem, *Diblumasyat Muhammad*, Khartoum n.d., pp. 11, 16, 19, 23, 241–244.

²⁸ U. Rubin, *Muhammad's Curse of Mudar and the Blockade of Mecca*, *JESHO* 31.3, 1988, pp. 249–264.

²⁹ The key source here is the Qur'an, which references the events of this period, e.g. 9:1–129. See also: M. Hamidullah, *Documents diplomatiques sur la diplomatie musulmane à l'époque du Prophète et des khalifés orthodoxes*, Beyrouth 1985, pp. 66–92, 360–369; A.A. Futajh, *Al-Alakat al-charidzija li-daulat al-islam bi-Al-Hijaz*, Cairo 2006, pp. 95–105.

³⁰ W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad in Mecca...*, pp. 82–83; A. Al-Kasem, *Diblumasyat...*, pp. 11–16.

³¹ It is definitely worth familiarising oneself with the full text of the *Constitution of Medina*. For the text, with its variations coming from different sources and corrections, which accompanied the creation of *umma*, see: Ibn Hishām, vol. II, p. 341; Abū 'Ubayd, pp. 202–207; Ibn Kathīr, *Tarikh*, vol. III, pp. 224, 226; M. Hamidullah, *Documents sur la diplomatie musulmane...*, I, pp. 4, 342; W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad in Mecca...*, p. 93; I.A. Al-Adawi, *An-Nuzum...*, pp. 114, 117, 126; A. Al-Kasem, *Diblumasyat...*, pp. 241–244 – the latter work mentions *Sahif*. The final, fifty-second chapter merits particular attention.

³² R. Marín-Guzmán, *Arab Tribes...*, pp. 59–60.

The unification of the Arab tribes showed the inadequacy of tribal leadership to the emerging Arab statehood. It turned out to be essential to introduce a common economic, defensive and foreign policy on the Arabian Peninsula³³. In order to achieve it a new governance model had to be implemented³⁴. This introduction encountered two obstacles to be overcome. The first one was the lack of sufficient funds, which would cover the cost of development and operation of the new administrative structures. The other problem was with achieving the realisation of the centralised power structure. Local leaders were reluctant to obey orders from Medina. An additional issue resulted from the fact that the new state structures were "imposed" on the already existing community.

When a new administrative division of Arabia was to be made, it was especially important that it coincide with prior tribal organisation, so that no tribe would feel aggrieved by the loss of part of their territory.

It was also characteristic that after dividing Arabia into provinces, leaders were chosen from among young warriors, who were expected to be more loyal than old chiefs³⁵. It is also worth mentioning that it is in the time of Muḥammad that the first activity of the new state on the international arena can be observed. Its manifestation was the expansion of the territory under Muslim rule. The territorial growth took place towards both the north and the south of the Arabian Peninsula. In the latter, the city of Aela (Aqaba) was conquered, which was synonymous with gaining control over shipping in the northern waters of the Red Sea³⁶.

Muḥammad died in Medina in 632 AD in the arms of his wife 'Ā'isha³⁷. Before his death he managed to unite within the new community many tribes of

³³ See, for particular accounts, the text by *Al-Sahif: Ibn Hishām*, vol. III, p. 341; *Abū 'Ubayd*, vol. I, pp. 202–207. See also: A. Al-Kasem, *Dibluwasijjat...*, pp. 11, 16–19, 241–244.

³⁴ *Qur'ān*, 105:1–5, 106:1–4; *Ibn Hishām*, pp. 37, 41, 43, 47–52; I. Shāhīd, *Two Quranic Suras: al-Fil and Qurys*, [in:] *idem*, *Byzantium and the Semitic Orient*, Ashgate 1988, art. XII, pp. 429–436; *idem*, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*, Washington 1989, pp. 350, 360, 376; A. Nour, *The Quran*, n.p. n.d., pp. 15–19, 30–39.

³⁵ S.A.Q. Al-Husaini, *Arab Administration*, Cairo 1958, pp. 44–49; I.A. Al-Adawi, *An-Nuzum...*, pp. 128–131; H. I. Hassan, A. Hassan, *An-Nuzum al-Islamiyya*, Cairo 1970, pp. 17–18, 129–130, 168–169, 292–294.

³⁶ *Balādhuri, Fūṭuh*, vol. I, pp. 71, 73, 128; Theophanes, AM 6123 (for information on the first Muslim attack on Byzantine territories). See also: Ch. Nomikos, *Ē machētōn Mothōn kai o tafos tou Gkiasar El Tagiar*, *EEBS* 3, 1926, pp. 97–100; E. Vranousi, *Byzantinoarabica: Oi Prōtoi Arabobydzantinoi Polemoi stēn Palaistinē, Iordania kai Foinikē*, *Sym* 3, 1979, pp. 1sq; F. Buhl, *Mu'ta*, [in:] *EI*, vol. VII, pp. 756–757; F. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquest*, Princeton 1981, p. 101; W.E. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquest*, Cambridge 1993, pp. 66, 72–74, 88; P. Brown, *O Kosmos tēs Ysterēs Archaioitētas 150–750 m. Ch.*, Athens 1998, pp. 201–206.

³⁷ N. Abbott, *Aishah. The Beloved of Muhammad*, Chicago 1942; W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad in Mecca...*, p. 227; *idem*, *'Āishah bint Abi Bakr*, [in:] *EI*, vol. I, pp. 307–

the Arabian Peninsula, some of whom converted to Islam. In the ideological sphere, the Prophet gave the Arabs a new supratribal substance and a religious legitimacy. Due to these achievements, Muḥammad was regarded as perfect, although it must be stressed that his descendants never tried to make him a divine personage³⁸.

Muḥammad left neither successor nor political testament. As a consequence, after his death *umma* found itself in crisis. This situation forced the tribal leaders to work out a compromise solution by appointing as successor to the Prophet his loyal companion, Abū Bakr (632–634)³⁹, who was granted the title of caliph (*khalīfah Rasūl Allāh*), becoming the first of the so-called orthodox or rightly guided caliphs (*al-Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn*).

Abū Bakr belonged to the most faithful of the Prophet's followers⁴⁰. He was a good merchant and proved also to be a ruthless leader. The task he faced was difficult, as the federation of tribes supporting Muḥammad did not guarantee stability or permanent peace. This resulted from the fact that the agreements reached by the Prophet with particular tribes were of a personal nature. These bound Muḥammad with particular tribal leaders for as long as the signatories lived. Moreover, these treaties were not always connected with converting to Islam. Leaders made agreements with Muḥammad with the aim of ensuring their economic and military safety, which participation in *umma* provided. After the Prophet's death the Arabs started to rethink the value of the community. The new leader of *umma* had to overcome difficulties resulting from the question of whether there was a need for the continued existence of the Arab tribes' alliance. Its stability was put to the test as the tribes' Islamisation was still superficial and they were reluctant to pay *zakāt* (charitable tax) to Medina, but also

308; A. Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an*, Austin 2002, pp. 125–126.

³⁸ *Qur'an*, 47 (*Muḥammad*); Ibn Hishām, vol. I, pp. 139, 178; W. Montgomery Watt, *Muḥammad in Mecca...*, pp. 26–28, 236–240; F. Bühl, A.T. Welch, *Muḥammad, the Prophet of Islam*, [in:] *EI*, vol. VII, pp. 360–376. There is a huge body of literature on Muḥammad; here we restrict ourselves to mention of only the most important works: U. Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muḥammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims (A Textual Analysis)*, Princeton 1995; M. Hamidullah, *The Life and Work of the Prophet of Islam*, Islamabad 1998; T. Andrae, *Mohammed: The Man and His Faith*, Dover 2000; *The Biography of Muḥammad: The Issue of the Sources*, ed. H. Motzki, Leiden 2000.

³⁹ H.I. Hassan, A. Hassan, *Islamic Institutions*, Cairo 1970, pp. 18, 20, 34–38.

⁴⁰ On Abū Bakr and his policy see in particular: M. Muranyi, *Ein neuer Bericht über die Wahl des ersten Kalifen Abū Bakr*, Ara 25, 1978, pp. 233–260; W. Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad. A Study of the Early Caliphate*, Cambridge 1997, pp. 28–57; K. Athamina, *The Pre-Islamic Roots of the Early Muslim Caliphate: the Emergence of Abū Bakr*, Isl 76, 1999, pp. 1–32.

due to the growing aversion to this central power. What is more, the ambitions of families and tribal leaders wanting full independence became more visible.

Abū Bakr's first move was to send letters to the chiefs of the tribes, in which he appealed to them to remain in the alliance, as it had been in the time of Muḥammad. He supported his appeal with the statement that joint campaigns outside Arabia would bring them greater benefits than the spoils of intertribal wars⁴¹. This was an announcement of aggression of the Muslim state in the Mediterranean world. Abū Bakr's invitation did not, however, convince all tribes. The apostasy of Yemeni, Omani, Nadjdan and other tribes led to the first civil war among Arabs after the death of Muḥammad. The period of the so-called *ridḍa* wars⁴² started. With the help of 'Umar ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb and the Muslim community, Abū Bakr pursued a policy of reunification by persuasion and the sword⁴³. During his two-year reign he had to face numerous conflicts among the tribes in order to impose upon them a reintegration to the *umma*⁴⁴. The victory of Abū Bakr ended with the slaughter of those who tried to break away from the Arab union, and undoubtedly changed the fate of the Arab world.

The conversion to the monotheistic faith proposed by Muḥammad to the citizens of Mecca and Medina was, simultaneously, an invitation to unification. The Arab world of the seventh century was just maturing to approve of such a unity and, although in the time of Muḥammad the Arabs' readiness to submit to a single centre of power was not yet visible, the unification of the tribes accomplished (not without violence) by his successor, Abū Bakr (632–634) proved to be long-lasting⁴⁵.

The fact that, on this occasion, the newly-created Arab state stood the test of time allows us to formulate one more hypothesis. The idea of joining forces and creating a supratribal community, driven by a simple survival instinct, had been put forward several times even before the birth of Islam. Thus, the common claim that it was the religion that led to the awakening of ethnic consciousness

⁴¹ M. Hamidullah, *Documents...*, pp. 332sqq, 371sqq.

⁴² E.S. Shoufani, *Al-Riddah and the Muslim conquest of Arabia*, Toronto, 1973; E. Landau-Tasserón, *The Participation of Tayyi in the Ridḍa*, JSAI 5, 1984, pp. 53–71; M.J. Kister, *The Struggle against Musaylima and the Conquest of Yamama*, JSAI 27, 2002, pp. 1–56; M. Lecker, *Tribes in Pre- and Early Islamic Arabia*, [in:] idem, *Peoples, Tribes and Society in Arabia around the Time of Muhammad*, Farnham 2005, art. XI, pp. 3–15.

⁴³ Balādhurī, *Futuh*, vol. I, pp. 113–120; E.S. Shoufani, *Al-Riddah...*; E. Landau-Tasserón, *The Participation...*, pp. 53–71.

⁴⁴ Balādhurī, *Futuh*, vol. I, pp. 113, 120, 125; M. Lecker, *Al-Ridda*, [in:] *EI*, vol. XII, suppl., pp. 692–695; M.J. Kister, *The Struggle...*, pp. 1–56.

⁴⁵ N. Sadawi, *Al-Da'ula...*, pp. 92, 99–104; Ph.K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, Basingstoke–New York 2002, pp. 140–146.

of the Arabs can be reversed: perhaps the creation of Islam resulted from the need for unification of the Arab tribes. Undoubtedly, this view requires further research.

The short reign of Abū Bakr, which was full of wars, did not admit any opportunities to develop the administrative system introduced by Muḥammad. Changes were only introduced by the second of the caliphs – ‘Umar ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb, who ruled for a whole decade, from 634 to 644 AD. His reign was an era of great Arab conquests⁴⁶. The large scale of the expansion demanded changes in the management of the rapidly growing country. It was at this time that some of the mechanisms operating in Byzantium were employed⁴⁷. ‘Umar implemented an administrative reform in new circumstances, facing problems resulting from the need to unify the territories, which differed in terms of tradition, language and religion. A new, previously unknown challenge emerged: gathering and sharing numerous movable assets obtained as spoils from the conquered territories, apportioning lands on the new terrain and managing permanent incomes from tributes (taxes) exacted from the infidels. In particular, collecting and managing poll taxes (*ḍjizya*) from non-Muslim inhabitants of the conquered lands were an issue not only of logistic but also of political and religious nature⁴⁸.

Apart from retaining the former Byzantine system of administration in Egypt and Syria, ‘Umar made a number of novel measures, which were continued by his successors. He created *Dīwān*, that is an office of state administration, as we would say today, to handle the census of the Muslim population and determine their incomes⁴⁹. Also among these innovations was *Bayt al-Māl*, a treasury aimed at collecting and storing the spoils of wars, and responsible for the financial aspects of the state’s operation.

The whole series of reforms undertaken by the caliph is often referred to as ‘*Umar’s Constitution*. The ruler declared that no religion other than Islam was legal on the Arabian Peninsula. Therefore, he ordered that Jews from Khaybar and

⁴⁶ I.A. Al-Aḍawī, *An-Nuzum...*, pp. 246–253.

⁴⁷ To what extent the Muslim administrative system used previous Byzantine patterns is still debatable – compare: S. O’Sullivan, *Early Umayyad Syria. A Study of its Origins and early Development*, St. Andrews 2002 [unpublished PhD thesis], pp. 130–140.

⁴⁸ This topic is covered in greater detail in the chapter *Economic Institutions of Early Islam. The Creation of Bayt al-Māl* (بيت المال). From Tribal Treasury to the “Ministry of Finance”.

⁴⁹ Balādhurī, *Fūṭuḥ*, vol. II, pp. 454, 456, 458; Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, vol. IV, p. 210; vol. V, p. 23 (ed. Cairo 1970); A.A. Durī, *Dīwān*, [in:] *EI*, vol. II, pp. 323–327. ‘Umar included in this registry all members of the *umma*, taking into account, among other factors, their relation to the Prophet and the role they played in the stabilisation the new state (Abū Yūsuf, p. 46 – ed. Cairo 1968). The first censuses in the world of Islam were motivated by economic considerations. The list included all Muslims, regardless of origin, Arabic or otherwise. Compare e.g. Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, vol. IV, p. 210 (ed. Cairo 1970); Balādhurī, *Fūṭuḥ*, vol. II, pp. 550, 552.

Christians from Nadjrān be banished. According to Philip Hitti, 'Umar's intention was to establish a *religious and military community* consisting of Arab Muslims. In order to achieve this, he forbade Arab conquerors to possess land outside the peninsula and commanded Arabs from the conquered territories to dwell in strictly defined places, maintaining their *racial purity*, as Hitti put it. The subjugated population was socially underprivileged in comparison to the conquerors (e.g. in administrative matters). However, after conversion to Islam, non-Arab subjects could be exempt from taxes (except *zakāt*, which was regarded as a religious duty). It is still a matter of significant dispute as to whether 'Umar introduced the land tax (*kharāj*) and poll tax (*djizya*). Contrary to Muslim tradition, it is today supposed that the division into these two taxes did not yet exist in the time of 'Umar and that both of these terms mean, generally speaking, a tribute. 'Umar is credited with dividing the spoils into two categories: movable assets and prisoners (*ghanīma*), granted only to soldiers, and land and money (*fay*'), which belonged to the whole community⁵⁰. These incomes were supposed to be collected in a single treasury, the *Bayt al-Māl*, which will be described in a separate chapter.

The succession of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān took place at the time when the Muslim state had become the most powerful in the region, its territory reaching central Asia. The greatest achievement of the third caliph, which left its mark on the history of the Muslim world, was the codification of the holy book of Islam – the *Qur'ān*⁵¹ – and proclaiming Arabic its only language, which led to the Arabisation of the conquered tribes⁵². In the context of shaping the nation's governance, both of these facts were meaningful. After all, the *Qur'ān* was considered to be the basic source of law⁵³.

The death of 'Uthmān, his assassination in Medina in 656 AD⁵⁴, once again undermined the unity of the Arabs, and the appointment of his successor, 'Alī, was questioned, and this in turn led to a civil war. This event must have shaken the foundations of the administrative system of the newly born Arab state. When describing the Arab administration of this period, the reader's attention must be drawn to one particular fact – as his residence 'Alī chose Mesopotamian Al-Kūfa. The religious and political position of this city increased significantly.

⁵⁰ Ph.K. Hitti, *History...*, pp. 169–172.

⁵¹ A. Al-Gindi, *Atwar as-sakafa al-arabijja*, n.p. n.d., pp. 85–89, 176–177; W. Montgomery Watt, Al.T. Welch, *Der Islam*, vol. I, Mohammed und die Frühzeit, islamisches Recht, religiöses Leben, Stuttgart 1980, pp. 176, 178, 180.

⁵² M. Ali, *The Religion of Islam...*, pp. 26, 28, 29.

⁵³ M. Gaudetroy-Demombynes, *Les institutions...*, pp. 45–52.

⁵⁴ Ibn Qutayba, vol. I, pp. 37, 40.

The administrative centre of the state was, for the first time in history, moved outside the Arabian Peninsula⁵⁵.

An analysis of the achievements of the period following the death of Muḥammad shows how great the state-building effort of that time was. The new phenomena – the unification of the tribes, setting down the text of the Qurʾān and the territorial expansion of the country – generated a need to modify the extant forms of community governance. At first, due to the lack of experience in these matters, the Byzantine system of administration was adopted, along with its full potential. Further changes were made during the reign of the Umayyad dynasty.

1.3. Management of the Umayyad Caliphate

Under the reign of the Umayyad dynasty the period of great conquests ended. The territory intended to be governed by the administrative machine spread from the Pillars of Hercules, through Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Armenia, and Persia up to the Indus River⁵⁶. The end of the era of conquest brought a certain stabilisation, though on the other hand, also an exhaustion of an important source of income – war spoils.

The foundation of the power of the Umayyad family is entwined with the name of Muʿāwīya, the first caliph of the dynasty. His final victory over ʿAlī and assumption of power over the whole *umma* meant breaking not only with the tradition of the so-called righteous (orthodox, rightly guided) caliphs, but also with the model of a state regarded as a conglomerate of tribes, governed by a ruler, who was chosen by their representatives⁵⁷. Even before Muʿāwīya gained power over the whole country, he demonstrated that he would aim for a thorough modernisation of the caliphate, through introducing some well-tried administrative models of the Byzantine Empire and, to a smaller extent, Sassanid Persia. During his service as governor of Syria, Muʿāwīya surrounded himself with advisers and secretaries who had experience with Byzantine administration and who came from Christianised south-Arabian tribes that had arrived in

⁵⁵ Ibn Ḳutayba, vol. I, pp. 53, 62.

⁵⁶ S.N. Fisher, *The Middle East*, London–New York 1971, p. 69sq; *The Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. I, Cambridge 1977, p. 74; I.M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, Cambridge 2002, pp. 37, 54; Ph.K. Hitti, *History...*, pp. 206–214.

⁵⁷ According to some interpretations, Muʿāwīya's aim was not to take the role of caliph, but rather to gain autonomy in his own province: M. Hinds, *The Siffin Arbitration Agreement*, JSS 17, 1972, pp. 93–113.

Syrian lands before the conquests of the righteous caliphs, such as Banū Kalb⁵⁸. What is more, in order to protect his Syrian subjects, he limited the number of immigrants from the Arabian Peninsula that could settle and permitted such settlement only in the areas neighbouring Byzantium. This let him recruit soldiers to the army and continue to invade the territories of the Empire with the greatest possible reduction of costs⁵⁹. It must also be added that despite the opposition of Mecca and Medina, he initiated the construction of a fleet, knowing that without it he would not be able to initiate a long-lasting war with Byzantium⁶⁰.

It would not have been possible to introduce these policies without the support of a part of the Arab ruling class. A good example of a person in whom the old world of Christianity and the new world of Islam are entwined is 'Amr ibn Sufyān Abū l-A 'war al-Sulamī, who is connected with the followers of Abū Sufyān. In his earlier life he was probably a Christian (inheriting the faith from his mother); he converted to Islam only after the fall of Mecca. In the time of 'Umar he played a definite role in the invasion of Syria. Later, in the years 653–654 he was one of the main proponents of creating an Arab navy and a commander of the first sea expedition to Cyprus, Crete and Rhodes⁶¹.

During his caliphate, Mu 'āwīya continued the policy of following Byzantine solutions. He kept rules drawn from Roman law and supported the system of *ikṭā*, which was concerned with transferring state lands to the caliph's clients (*mawālā*), who then held it on the basis of a hereditary lease and had to pay a suitable tax (as *mukṭa* – beneficiaries). In this way it became possible to reclaim a number of wastelands, e.g. those of southern Iraq, taking advantage of the fact that the Qur'ān made no mention of this form of land transfer⁶². At the same time, he retained the right of Byzantine origin, to take over the inheritance of foreigners, which enabled seizing the estates of Byzantines who had emigrated from Syria after the Arab conquest. This let him create his personal domain, as the first caliph, which later became the basis for the dynastic might of

⁵⁸ D. Madeyska, *Historia świata arabskiego. Okres klasycyzny: od starożytności do końca epoki Umajjadów (750)*, Warszawa 1999, p. 157sq.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 160sq.

⁶⁰ Ph.K. Hitti, *History...*, p. 193sq.

⁶¹ Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, I, 2820–2826, V, 258–262. Cf. W.E. Kaegi, *Byzantium...*, p. 246sq.; L.I. Conrad, *The Conquest of Arwād: A Source-Critical Study in the Historiography of the Early Medieval Near East*, [in:] *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East: Problems in the Literary Source Material*, eds. A. Cameron, L.I. Conrad, G.R.D. King, London 1992, p. 362sq.; W. Al-Qādi, *Population Census and Land Surveys under the Umayyads (41–132/661–750)*, *Isl* 82, 2006, p. 354sq.

⁶² H. Lammen, *Études sur le regne du calife omayyade Mo'awia Ier*, Paris–Leipzig–London 1907, p. 236sq.

the Umayyads⁶³. *Iktā* is also connected with the first censuses, thanks to which it became possible to suitably reorganise the fiscal system of the emerging country. As it can be concluded from the research of Wadād al-Qādi, representatives of the Sufyānid line of the Umayyad dynasty, which began with Mu'āwiya, based their census methodology upon Byzantine and Sasanian practices, drawing on the experience of former imperial officials. In Egypt they sought support from Coptic clergymen⁶⁴. His research further states that the Sufyānids did not create a national model of making censuses at all, and that their policy in this matter consisted purely of incidental reactions to improprieties⁶⁵.

The original administrative division of the caliph's nation was also based on regulations borrowed from the Byzantines and the Sasanians. Thus, seemingly perforce, the country was initially divided into three main units governed by emirs. These were Syria and Mesopotamia, with its capital in Damascus; Iraq and the eastern provinces, with capital cities in Al-Kūfa and Basra; and Egypt and North Africa, whose administrative centre was first Miṣr al-Fuṣṭāṭ and later Cairo⁶⁶. In the following period the country became divided into six provinces: Great Syria (Filasṭīn, Al-Urdunn, Dimashq, Ḥims and Ḳinnasrīn), Upper Mesopotamia, i.e. Al-Jazeera (also including Armenia, Azerbaijan and eastern edges of Asia Minor), Lower Mesopotamia with capitals in Basra and Wasica (this being Iraq, Khuzestan, Fars, Kerman, Makran, Sistan, Sind, Tabaristan, Khorasan, Mawarannahr), the Arabian Peninsula (Al-Ḥidjāz, Nadjd, Yemen, Al-Yamāma), Egypt, and Ifrikiya (covering, apart from the area of today's Tunisia, western Maghreb and Arabic Spain⁶⁷). Through utilising the abilities of Christians – former Byzantine officials, who were entrusted with the government of Syria – Mu'āwiya managed to introduce a reform of the central offices of the Caliphate. From the ideas of Sardjūn ibn Mansūr (son of Sergius, financial administrator of Damascus, who had surrendered the city to the Arabs in 635) the caliph organised various offices, through which the state could function appropriately. The most important of them was *Dīwān al-Kharāj*, an office of taxation, which will be further described in another chapter of the book.

The military *Dīwān* (*Dīwān al-Jund*) was a “ministry of war”, in charge of the recruitment of soldiers. This office held censuses on the basis of which

⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 249sqq.

⁶⁴ W. Al-Qādi, *Population Census...*, p. 341sqq.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 364.

⁶⁶ G.R. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam. The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661–750*, Carbondale–Edwardsville 1987, p. 355sqq.

⁶⁷ D. Małeyska, *Historia świata arabskiego...*, p. 197sqq.

the army recruitment was carried out. It must be emphasised that Mu'āwīya appointed a supratribal army, one that can be called the army of the caliphate. This was a real blow for the tribal system. To a large degree, it was modelled on the Byzantine army (for example in weaponry and uniform). From the time of Marwānids, the commander-in-chief was the caliph himself: he led the army recruited, to a large degree, from Syria, from the people whose loyalty was guaranteed to the Umayyads. The army was not only a tool of military policy but also an instrument which centralised the country⁶⁸.

The fleet (*al-uṣṭūl*) was organised during the same period, also on the basis of the Byzantine model. Since the Arabs had no sea-going experience, the caliph's fleet consisted, almost entirely, of non-Arab nations, mostly Egyptians, Syrians and Byzantines. With the fleet, the Arabs were set to become a seafaring power and the Byzantine Empire gained an enemy on the Mediterranean Sea. The military *Dīwān* was one of the earliest, as it is said to have been established as early as in the time of caliph 'Umar⁶⁹.

The second office was *Dīwān al-Barīd*, the postal service, which was organised during the reign of the Marwānid line of the Umayyads and based on the Byzantine and Persian models. The post constituted a very important element of the state administration, which became particularly significant in the extensive country. It guaranteed effective communication within the caliphate and swift circulation of information between the government agencies, which systematically received news about any rebellions and unrests in provinces. The third of the offices, *Dīwān al-Rasā'il*, the office of correspondence, was actually the central office (chancery) of the caliphate. The seal office (*Dīwān al-Khātām*) was, among other duties, responsible for confirming the validity of correspondence and the caliph's orders. The last of the offices, *Dīwān al-Kharāj* was in charge of introducing and collecting taxes.

Those who governed provinces had considerable scope of action, foremost from the fact that, in the event of war, they could call the army and command troops. They frequently appointed governors of smaller holdings or cities from among their own tribesmen. For example, the governor of Iraq (724–738), Khālīd ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Ḳasrī, appointed his brother the governor of Khorasan. It must be pointed out that, in such situations, once-local tribes acquired

⁶⁸ R. Marín-Guzmán, *Arab Tribes...*, p. 69.

⁶⁹ F. McGraw Donner, *Centralized Authority and Military Autonomy in the Early Islamic Conquest*, [in:] *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, vol. III, *States, Resources and Armies. Papers of the Third Workshop on Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, ed. A. Cameron, Princeton 1995, p. 355.

great influence across the country. Some – especially tribal leaders and those who were, at the same time, governors and local commanders – were influential enough to consider rebelling against the caliph, and in fact this did happen quite often. Therefore, caliphs sometimes dismissed governors who grew too independent and dangerous, or those who were embroiled in continuous tribal struggles and were not able to control their region. However, those who stayed loyal while, at the same time, belonging to the Umayyad family, could take advantage of the new system, e.g. becoming owners of some very attractive properties. Special favour was given to those governors who were appointed by the caliph himself (*'ummāl*), and whose duty was to lead new expeditions against foreign enemies. They had the right, at least in most cases, to divide the spoils freely⁷⁰.

The capstone of the administrative activity of Mu'āwiyā was the establishment of a hereditary post of caliph. In 679 AD he appointed his son – Yazīd – his successor, which was legitimised by representatives of all the provinces of the caliphate, who swore an oath of allegiance to him⁷¹. There are many inaccurate accounts of the issue of supreme authority in the Muslim empire, which was caused mainly by the negative opinions about the Umayyad caliphs that were formulated in the Abbasid period. Supporters of latter dynasty accused the Umayyads of undermining the authority of the caliph and limiting his role to a purely civilian one, without any religious meaning. Recent research, conducted by, among others, Abedel Rahman Tayyara and Khalil Athamina, contradicts these interpretations. The former studied the prophetic functions⁷² connected with exercising the post of caliph. According to this researcher, for the early Muslim period we can discuss an intense search for the foundations of Muḥammad's religion in the Christian and Jewish tradition, whose inseparable elements, according to A.E.-R. Tayyara, were the prophetic abilities of the ruler⁷³. The caliph's dual function of *king and prophet (mulk wa-nubuwwa)* has been noted by many historians⁷⁴. Tayyara precisely dates the emergence of this prerogative of a Muslim

⁷⁰ R. Marín-Guzmán, *Arab Tribes...*, p. 66.

⁷¹ Ph.K. Hitti, *History...*, p. 196.

⁷² On the subject of prophetism in early Islam see: A.H. Siddiqi, *Prophethood in Islam*, Karachi–Lahore–Dacca 1968, *passim*; J. Al-Haq, *Epistemology of Prophethood in Islam*, Taw 4, 1987, pp. 53–71; L. Marlow, *Kings, Prophets and the 'Ulamā in Medieval Islamic Advice Literature*, *StI* 18, 1995, pp. 101–120; Ch. Robinson, *Prophecy and Holy Men in Early Islam*, [in:] *The Cult of the Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown*, eds. J. Howard-Johnston, P.A. Hayward, Oxford 1999, pp. 241–262.

⁷³ A.E.-R. Tayyara, *Prophethood and Kingship in Early Islamic Historical Thought*, *Isl* 84, 2008, p. 101sq; idem, *Prophethood and the Making of Islamic Historical Identity*, *MLFP* 116, 2013, pp. 1–28.

⁷⁴ A. Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingships: Power and the Sacred in Muslim, Christian and Pagan*, London–New York 2001, p. 41sq; U. Rubin, *Prophets and Caliphs*, [in:] *Methods and*

ruler to the late Umayyad period, the first quarter of the eighth century, probably to the reign of 'Umar II, associating this phenomenon with the person of *cadi* 'Āmir ibn Sharāḥīl ibn 'Abd al-Sha'bī. It was in this period, according to 'Tayyara, that Muslim accounts of Solomon, the "king and prophet" were created⁷⁵.

Khalil Athamina has made a detailed recapitulation of sources concerning the ways in which the post of a caliph was taken in the early Muslim period. First of all, it must be emphasised after this author that, in accordance with the tradition included both in Qur'ān and in ḥadīths, neither in the time of Muḥammad nor after his death any stable rules regarding the election of a successor were established⁷⁶. Contrary to later interpretations, which would give exclusive right of inheritance for his legacy to the members of the Quraysh family, the fact that the Prophet did not make a decision brought chaos, which the ruling class tried to overcome by reference to pre-Muslim customs. Athamina pointed out a custom well-rooted in the Arabic tradition, the role of *dhū al-tāj*, that is a "holder of the crown". This term (interchangeable with *malik*) was used with reference to the leaders of tribal "kingdoms"⁷⁷. The researcher also stressed that in the Arabic tribal tradition, the term *ahl al-bayt* denoting a family did not embrace relatives but also people of similar interests, common aims etc. The ruler decided who would belong to a family in this meaning of the word⁷⁸. The requirement of the unanimous agreement of all the interested parties as to the particular candidate derived from the pre-Muslim tradition, called *mashūra* – a deeply rooted tribal custom, which Mu'āwiya did not dare to change, appointing his son Yazīd the successor⁷⁹.

The role of Mu'āwiya in strengthening Arab power in the conquered areas cannot be overestimated. It is not easy to maintain brevity when presenting the achievements of this caliph in the process of laying the foundation of the Muslim state. One may say that he adjusted the young political organism to contemporary administrative and fiscal standards. He did not concern himself with the fact that the Byzantine and Persian patterns he employed were not always

Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins, ed. H. B e r g, Leiden–Boston 2003, pp. 73–99; P. C r o n e, *God's Rule: Government and Islam*, New York 2005, p. 115sq.

⁷⁵ A.E.-R. T a y y a r a, *Prophethood and Kingship...*, p. 91sq. It should be noticed that it could have also been Sulaymān, the predecessor of 'Umar II, who, according to some accounts, was fascinated with the figure of Solomon and was said to have been planning to move the capital of the Caliphate to Jerusalem.

⁷⁶ K. A t h a m i n a, *The Pre-Islamic Roots...*, pp. 1–3.

⁷⁷ I d e m, *The Tribal Kings in Pre-Islamic Arabia. A Study of the Epithet Malik or Dhū Al-Tāj in Early Arabic Tradition*, QREA 19, 1998, pp. 19–37.

⁷⁸ I d e m, *The Pre-Islamic Roots...*, pp. 9–15.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 19sq.

in accordance with the rules of Islam. Exemplary of this is his use of a *makṣūra*, a curtained bower within a mosque, where he was separated from the rest of the *umma* (in contrast to the simple customs of the orthodox caliphs). In this can be seen a certain aspiration for the sacralisation of the ruler⁸⁰. It is worth stressing that Mu'āwīya chose Damascus for his capital city: a large urban centre, which was to aspire to be the Constantinople of the Arab world⁸¹. Once in Damascus, the position of caliph would acquire a dazzling allure when seen through the eyes of Byzantium and Persia. We can say that here, on the River Barada, did the time of the real Muslim monarchy start⁸².

We should also mention that, in accordance with Arabic tradition, the son of Abū Sufyān belonged to the so-called *duhāt*: in literal translation, “geniuses”, who were tasked with expanding the might and power of the caliphs’ empire⁸³. He was also said to possess the trait of *hilm* – attributed only to outstanding individuals – reason, wisdom, generosity, gentleness and understanding: the features of a real ruler⁸⁴. It should be added that the depiction of this sovereign on Muslim sources is not so explicit. Authors who were critics of Mu'āwīya, such as Abū Mikhnaf or Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, accuse him of indecision and a tendency to avoid confrontation. According to their narrative, Mu'āwīya simply did not merit the throne⁸⁵. This criticism cannot however change the fact that his

⁸⁰ Some scholars claim that this was equivalent to transforming from the *republican* to a *monarchical* model of governance. It was noticed as early as the Middle Ages, see, e.g. Ibn Khaldūn, pp. 112–116 (particularly the chapter concerning the transformation of the Caliphate into a kingdom).

⁸¹ A. von Kremer, *The Orient under the Caliphs*, Calcutta 1920, pp. 133, 186; M. Al-Khudari, *Tarikh al-Tashri al-Islami*, vol. I, Cairo 1934, pp. 503–505, 567, 630–634; A.M. Magued, *Apparition et chute des Fatimides en Egypte. Histoire politique*, Alexandrie 1968, pp. 14, 185–193; H. Badawy, *The Administrative Organization of Egypt after the Arab Conquest. Similarities and Differences to the Byzantine Model*, Thessaloniki 1994, pp. 54–68, 75sq.

⁸² A.M. Magued, *Apparition...*, pp. 14–15, 61–65.

⁸³ Although it is regarded as a controversial practice to call the caliph’s country an “empire”, especially due to the lack of a lexical equivalent in Arabic sources, some scholars, such as Hugh Kennedy, claim that the Caliphate had all the features of this kind of political entity and thus the use of this term is, by all means, justified. See: H. Kennedy, *The Decline and Fall of the First Muslim Empire*, Isl 81, 2004, p. 35qq.

⁸⁴ H. Lammens, *Études sur le siècle des Omayyades*, Beirut 1930, pp. 27–163; J.J. Saunders, *A History of Medieval Islam*, London 1965, pp. 59–70; G.R. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam...*, pp. 24–45; D. Madeyska, *Historia świata arabskiego...*, pp. 155–170; Ph.K. Hitti, *History...*, pp. 189–198; H. Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates. The Islamic Near East from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century*, London–New York 2004, pp. 82–90.

⁸⁵ It is probable that F. Wilfred was influenced by these two Arabic authors when he was

name was respected even under the reign of the Abbasids, who fiercely opposed the preceding Umayyads⁸⁶. The rule of Mu'āwīya was also positively described by Christian chroniclers, who appreciated the freedom he granted to religious organisations.

The second important stage of reforms of the caliphate, implemented by the Umayyads, occurred during the reigns of two of the Marwānid line of the dynasty – 'Abd Al-Malik and Al-Walid I. These reforms are commonly associated with the Arabisation of the country⁸⁷. They were designed by Al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf, a man of humble origin, who gained a high position in the country through his military career⁸⁸. The greatest element of this reform was the introduction of the Arabic language to public administration, replacing the previously used Greek. Implicit in this change was a need to replace a part of the clerical personnel. Analyses of Egyptian papyri, especially the work of Nikolaos Gonis and Petra M. Sijpesteijn, shed light on the composition of the staff in the early Muslim period. The later author mentions a case of Athanasius, a pagarch of Hermopolis⁸⁹. His letter to his subordinate Shenoute, in which he informed that the *emir* had ordered the collection of taxes, survived. Athanasius was worried that his subordinate taxpayers would flee, so he commanded that any spotted fugitives be captured and sent to him. In the light of this document, it must be concluded that the pagarch was responsible for sending taxes to the Muslim treasury. He was also entitled to employ coercive measures against those who avoided this obligation. Athanasius was probably a Christian, who had also performed a clerical function in the Byzantine period⁹⁰. Interestingly, in his text he used the term

writing: *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate*, Cambridge 1997. We ourselves draw this opinion from: K. Keshé, *When Did Mu'āwīya Become Caliph*, JNES 69, 2010, p. 323sqq.

⁸⁶ Ch. Pellat, *Le culte de Mu'āwīya au III^e siècle de l'hégire*, StI 6, 1956, pp. 53–66; T. El-Hibri, *The Redemption of Umayyad Memory by the 'Abbāsids*, JNES 61, 2002, pp. 241–265.

⁸⁷ G.R. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam...*, p. 95sqq.

⁸⁸ R. Marin-Guzmán, *Arab Tribes...*, pp. 69, 88–89 (footnote 57 therein).

⁸⁹ P.M. Sijpesteijn, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the Beginning of Muslim Rule*, [in:] *Egypt in the Byzantine World 300–700*, ed. R.S. Bagnall, Cambridge–New York 2007, pp. 445–446. For a review of research conducted to date on the creation of the authority of the Arabic conquerors in Egypt: P.M. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State. The World of a Mid-Eighth-Century Egyptian Official*, Oxford 2013, pp. 49–216.

⁹⁰ He could also be a newly-converted Muslim. John of Nikiu, a chronicler who wrote about the Arabic conquest of Egypt stated: *many of the Egyptians, who had been false Christians denied the holy orthodox faith (...) and embraced the religion of the Moslem, the enemies of God, and accepted the detestable of the beast, this is, Mohammed, and they erred together with those idolaters, and took arms in their hands and fought against the Christians* (John of Nikiu, CXXI, 10, p. 201).

andrismos, meaning tax, which had been collected in Egypt during the Byzantine reign. Similar nomenclature for tribute can be found in two documents from the first decades of the eighth century, which were analysed by N. Gonis⁹¹; these are dated according to the Roman system⁹². We will now make the statement that, although the method of tax collection had not changed significantly from the Byzantine times, the allegation of passivity levelled towards the first Umayyads⁹³ does not seem justified. We have information about numerous innovations introduced by Muslim governors, especially in Egypt. Administrative units were merged (e.g. Arcadia and the Thebaid), while others were divided (Heracleopolis into Upper and Lower divisions for example)⁹⁴. An increase in the number of documents issued is also apparent⁹⁵. Moreover, the administrative system was centralised: pagarchs became direct subjects of an Arab governor⁹⁶.

Thanks to these reforms – attributed to ‘Abd Al-Malik and Al-Walid I as their introduction lasted between ten and twenty years, leaving some uncertainty as to which was the initiator⁹⁷ – Arabic acquired the status of the language of the well-educated elite, replacing Greek in this role. The reforms opened the clerical occupation to the urban communities of the Arabs. This change of official language seems to be natural, if we consider the stage of the country’s development and the time which had passed since the Arabic conquest of Syria and Egypt⁹⁸. It must be admitted that Al-Walid I tried to limit the number of officials of the Christian faith⁹⁹, though this command was not followed with enthusiasm, which is documented in Byzantine sources¹⁰⁰. One element of the Ara-

⁹¹ N. G o n i s, *Two Poll-Tax Receipts from Early Islamic Egypt*, ZPE 131, 2000, pp. 150–154.

⁹² Different systems of measuring time existed contemporaneously in Egypt for a long time. For more detailed information on this topic, see: R.S. B a g n a l l, K.A. W o r p, *Chronological Systems of Byzantine Egypt*, Leiden–Boston 2004. This paper contains numerous useful appendices, which might be helpful for converting between dates given according to Diocletian’s era and those dated in years after the Hidjra. See: *ibidem*, pp. 300–312.

⁹³ W. A l - Q â d i, *Population Census...*, p. 364.

⁹⁴ It cannot be taken for granted that these changes were not introduced by the Byzantines as part of restoring their authority over Egypt from the Persians. Compare: P.M. S i j p e s t e i - j n, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt...*, p. 445.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 444.

⁹⁶ S.J. S t a f f a, *Conquest and Fusion. The Social Evolution of Cairo AD 642–1850*, Leiden 1977, p. 19.

⁹⁷ Ph.K. H i t t i, *History...*, pp. 221–222.

⁹⁸ G.R. H a w t i n g, *The First Dynasty of Islam...*, p. 64.

⁹⁹ C. B r o c k e l m a n n, *History of the Islamic Peoples*, London 1964, p. 84sq.

¹⁰⁰ Theophanes, although he perceived the change of official language to Arabic as a form of persecution against Christians under Umayyad rule, did add that this command was not implemented too strictly; this as, up to his time (the beginning of the ninth century), it was possible to encounter Christian officials in the court of the caliph. T h e o p h a n e s, AM 6199, p. 376.

bisation was the unification of the monetary system – the replacement of *solidi* and Persian coins with gold dinars and silver dirhams. The first characteristically Arab money began to be minted at the end of the seventh century¹⁰¹.

The third stage of the Umayyad's state reforms, not entirely successful, was an attempt to Islamise the empire. Although the tax exemption for Muslim neophytes introduced by 'Umar II was quickly cancelled by his successors due to a drastic depletion of state incomes, it did contribute to the conversion of Christians to Islam¹⁰². The reform greatly influenced the image of 'Umar II in Byzantine sources. Theophanes the Confessor depicted him as one of the most anti-Christian rulers in history. In one account, the author compiles a list of almost everything that could be considered an anti-Christian decision by the Umayyads, about whom he wrote¹⁰³.

In addition to detailing these slights, the historian also mentioned the tax exemption of Muslim converts¹⁰⁴. Theophanes considered this move to be a further repressive action against Christians¹⁰⁵. It is an understandable attitude, since the rescript had encouraged Christians to abandon their faith and convert to Islam. It is worth adding that, for the same reason, 'Umar II was perceived in an utterly different way to the other Umayyad caliphs in the, subsequent, Abbasid period. Characteristic of this retained respect is the fact that his grave was not profaned; as such his tomb was treated unlike those of the other Umayyad caliphs. Indeed, among the Abbasids his piety was so deeply respected that one caliph, Al-Muhtadi, took him to be the epitome of a model ruler¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰¹ In Poland, the subject of Byzantine and Arabic minting in this period was researched by: S. Skowronek, *Treść i temat monet bizantyńskich*, BNum 39, 1969, pp. 735–738; i d e m, *Wczesnoarabskie naśladownictwa monet bizantyńskich*, BNum 41, 1969, pp. 781–783.

¹⁰² H.A.R. Gibb, *The Fiscal Rescript of 'Umar II*, Ara 2, 1955, pp. 2–7; D. Madeyska, *Historia świata arabskiego...*, p. 179; G.R. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam...*, p. 76sq.

¹⁰³ Theophanes described 'Umar II as a fanatical follower of Islam, one who even tried to convert the emperor himself, and at the same time a keen persecutor of Christians. It is worth mentioning that many eastern sources do not give such a negative portrayal of the Umayyad ruler. Theophanes, AM 6210, p. 399. Cf. K. Kościelniak, *Polemika muzulmańsko-chrześcijańska na podstawie korespondencji przypisywanej kalifowi umajjadzkiemu 'Umarowi II († 720) i cesarzowi bizantyjskiemu Leonowi III († 741)*, FHC 8, 2002, pp. 97–105; B. Cecota, *Wybrane zagadnienia z korespondencji muzulmańsko-chrześcijańskiej na podstawie Historii kalifów Ghewonda*, [in:] *Per aspera ad astra. Materiały z XVI Ogólnopolskiego Zjazdu Historyków Studentów*, vol. XIV, Kraków 2008, pp. 27–44.

¹⁰⁴ Theophanes, AM 6210, p. 399.

¹⁰⁵ The same image of the effect of 'Umar's rescript is conveyed by Coptic historiography. *History of the Patriarchs*, vol. III, p. 72.

¹⁰⁶ J. Hauziński, *Burzliwe dzieje kalifatu bagdadzkiego*, Warszawa–Kraków 1993, p. 174.

2. Economic Institutions of Early Islam The Creation of Bayt al-Māl (بيت المال) From Tribal Treasury to the “Ministry of Finance”

Before Islam became the dominant religion in the Arabian Peninsula, the economy of this region functioned within small, separate communities, both family and tribal. Social bonds and the needs of tribe members stemmed from an old tradition of common origin and common interests of a particular group¹. Another factor affecting the development of social relations and governance mechanisms of the primitive economy was organically connected with the natural environment of the peninsula².

An important element in the evolution of the governance system of finance essential for the tribe's functioning and, sometimes, for conquests organised by its members was the institution of the “House of Money” (*Bayt al-Māl*; بيت المال) – which soon began to play role similar to today's of central bank or ministry of finance (we must remember that a comparison like this should not be treated literally, their only aim is to facilitate reading).

Analysing the development of *Bayt al-Māl* we can investigate into the process of evolution of economic administration of the early Muslim state. Such a research should be based on all available sources contemporary to the events described therein. Still, in the case of early Arab accounts, it is difficult to discuss the texts focused on economic issues due to their style and language³, as they are purely literary texts.

¹ H. Badawy, *Introduction to the History of Islamic World*, vol. I, Thessalonikē 2013, pp. 99, 119, 133sq, 174, 188, 204sq, 209–211.

² Ibn Khaldūn (ed. A. Abd Wahid Wafi), pp. 77–80. See: I.A. Al-Adawi, *Al-Nuzum Al-Islamiya*, Cairo 1972, pp. 3–7.

³ There are sources and many tax consulting books referring strictly to the technical aspects of the Islamic economy – e.g. Abū 'Ubayd Al-Qāsim Ibn Sallām (d. 838

The present text is an attempt to systematise the knowledge about the economic structure of the initial stage of the caliphate. Our discourse will be based on the analysis of the work of newly-created institutions, such as *Bayt al-Māl* and *Bayt al Māl al-Muslimīn* (بيت مال المسلمين) later referred to “Public *Bayt al-Māl*”. We have taken into account the circumstances in which these institutions were established and their evolution, assuming that they were created out of a deep need to share resources owned by local communities. To a large extent, the chapter is based on the analysis of sources from the Arabic cultural circle, which, hopefully, will fill the gaps in the contemporary scientific discourse devoted to the beginning of Islamic economy. Scholars point out that the principles of *Bayt al-Māl* have not been sufficiently analysed. E. Levi-Provençal has investigated the matter in detail, but only in the area of the Iberian Peninsula, while more general information has been prepared by C. Cahen in his irreplaceable *Encyclopaedia of Islam*⁴.

2.1. Creation of the Muslim State and Its Major Economic Institutions

It is not an easy task to find traces of functioning of even one economic institution, or the activity of any economic system commonly accepted by all tribes of the Arabian Peninsula before the birth of Islam. Tribal relations, both in internal and intertribal aspect, were based on ephemeral historical iden-

AD, 224 AH), *The Book of Revenue: Kitāb al-amwāl* (*The Great Books of Islamic Civilization*), transl. I.A.K. Nyazee, Reading 2005; Al-Māwardī (d. 1058 AD, 450 AH), *Al-Aḥkām al-sultāniyya wa-al-wilāyāt al-dīniyya*, London 1996; *Kitāb al-Kharāj* by Abū Yusuf (d. 798 AD, 182 AH); *Kitāb al-Kharāj* by Yaḥyā Ibn Ādam (d. 818 AD, 203 AH); *Kitāb al-kharāj wa-sinā'at al-kitāba* (*Book of the Land Tax*) by Qudāma ibn Dja'far (d. 948 AD, 337 AH) contains rich information in particular for *Bilād al-Shām*, Land Laws and economic policy during the reign of 'Umar Ibn Abd al-'Azīz (the Pious), etc. The books of *Al-Fiḥḥ* – in general – offer very useful historical material of great importance in comparison to other sources. All the above-mentioned specialised *Fiḥḥ* (*Kutub Al-Fiḥḥ*) primary sources depend mainly, in selecting and interpreting their data, upon two earlier but categorically “official” documents, which can easily be characterized as the *Sources of the Sources* (*Masāder Al-Awwalīn*; *Masāder Al-Masāder*; مصادر الأولين أو مصادر المصادر), i. e. the Holy Bible of Islam – the Qur'ān (often called “First Book of the Arabs”) and also: *Al-Ṣaḥīfa*, *Ṣaḥīfa al-Madīna* or *Dustūr Al-Umma*, i. e. the *Constitution of the Umma*. The former is dated 610 to 632, and the latter, probably, to 622–630.

⁴ E. Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire de l'Espagne musulman*, vol. III, Paris 1947, pp. 1–54; R. Mantran, *L'expansion musulman, VII^e–XI^e siècle*, Paris 1995, p. 248; C. Cahen, *Bayt al Māl*, [in:] *EI*, vol. I, p. 1146. Cf. also A. Mez, *Islamic Civilization in the 4th Century Hegira*, vol. I, Cairo 1957, pp. 191–192.

tity and more or less stable alliances, such as the tribal union of Ghassānids in the north-western part of the peninsula, Lakhmids in the north-east and Kinda in the central part⁵. Political organisations of this kind dominated the internal relations on the Arabian Peninsula as early as two centuries before the birth of Muḥammad⁶. The biggest social group in this area had always been a tribe – the centre of all forms of settlement, whose members obeyed the common, unwritten law.

The nature of a desert and landform features of the Arabian Peninsula prevented the emergence of big, densely populated centres, where stable social relations, crucial for the creation of a country, could be formed. In other words, it was the desert nature of the Arabian Peninsula that largely caused the preservation of the tribal lifestyle, way of thinking and acting⁷.

After the triumph of Islam, when Muḥammad decided that his headquarters would be in Medina⁸ (previously Yathrib), the process of building administration and financial organisation of the new country began. One of the first legal regulations was a document known as *The Charter of Medina* (وثيقة المدينة), which, in early Arabic sources, is quoted as the *Constitution of the Community* (*Dustūr al-Ummah*; دستور الأمة or *As-Ṣaḥīfa*; صحيفة المدينة)⁹. This document regulated the relations between Muslims and Jews¹⁰, but, it also included parts concerning economic issues for the followers of Islam¹¹. The text determined basic economic rules of the Muslim country. Within their scope, certain traditional norms, such as the system of ransom (*niẓām al-fadiya aw diya*; نظام الفدية أو الدية) or the rules of paying debts etc. were maintained¹².

⁵ For the tribe and the tribal system, see: Ibn Khaldūn (ed. Tunis 1991), pp. 70, 74–75, 84; I.A. Al-Adawi, *Nuzum...*, pp. 1–4, 9–11.

⁶ H.I. Hassan, A.I. Hassan, *Islamic Institutions*, Cairo 1970, pp. 17–18, 167–168.

⁷ I.A. Al-Adawi, *Nuzum...*, pp. 1–4, 9–11.

⁸ Ibn Hishām, vol. II, p. 119 (ed. Cairo 1937); H.I. Hassan, A.I. Hassan, *Islamic...*, pp. 168–169.

⁹ On the *Constitution of Medina* see: M.S.Q. Al-Husaini, *Arab Administration*, Cairo 1958; R.B. Sergeant, *The “Constitution of Medina”*, IQ 7, 1964, pp. 3–16; M. Hamidullah, *The First Written Constitution in the World: An Important Document of the Time of the Holy Prophet*, Lahore 1975, *passim*; idem, *Documents sur la diplomatie musulmane à l’époque du Prophète et des khalīfes orthodoxes*, Beirut 1985; G. Schaller, *Die “Gemeindeordnung von Medina” – Darstellung eines politischen Instruments. Ein Beitrag zur gegenwärtigen Fundamentalismus-Diskussion im Islam*, Augsburg 1985, *passim*; A. Walker, *Constitution of Medina*, [in:] *Muhammad in History, Thought, and Culture: An Encyclopedia of the Prophet of God*, vol. I, eds. C. Fitzpatrick, A. Walker, Santa Barbara 2014, pp. 113–115.

¹⁰ Ibn Hishām, vol. II, p. 150; I.A. Al-Adawi, *Nuzum...*, pp. 127–132.

¹¹ Ibn Hishām, vol. II, p. 119.

¹² Ibn Hishām, vol. II, pp. 119–123.

These earliest legal regulations were essential to solve the problem of war spoils (*al-ghanā'im*; الغنائم)¹³. Although, according to Ibn Hishām, the first plunder of Muslims consisted only of the Quraysh camels with a consignment of rai-sins and a couple of prisoners, soon after that the followers of Muḥammad faced the need to divide the spoils obtained after the battle of Badr (624 AD, 2 AH), during which they captured the whole camp of the Quraysh¹⁴.

In order to avoid any disagreement, the first regulations concerning the division of loots were precisely outlined in Sūra 8 of the Qur'an, entitled *The spoils of war* (*Al-Anfāl*; سورة الأنفال): *They ask you concerning the anfāl./ Say, "the anfāl belong to Allah and the Apostle"/ So be wary of Allah and settle your differences,/ and obey Allah and His Apostle,/ should you be faithful*¹⁵. Goods obtained as a result of wars enabled further conquests and helped to maintain the Muslim fighting spirit, which was important during expeditions against the enemies of the *umma*. Their significance can be proven by the fact that even the Prophet himself had an official called "the writer of spoils of God's Messenger" (*katib ghanā'im Rasūl Allāh*; كاتب غنائم رسول الله)¹⁶. However, in the time of Muḥammad, no budget surplus was being collected. The sources of income were limited to utilising natural resources of the peninsula and their management was based on fairly simple rules, designed for a particular tribes. At that stage, there was no need for creating an institution which would control the finances of the forming state. All political, administrative, economic and military functions were in the hands of the Prophet.

After the death of Muḥammad in 632 AD, his descendants entered the path of conquest¹⁷. The first caliph and successor was Abū Bakr, who ruled between 632 and 634 AD. His reign began the era of the so-called "orthodox" or "right-guided" caliphs (*al-khulafā' ar-rāshidūn*; الخلفاء الراشدون)¹⁸, which lasted from 632 to 656 AD (or, depending on interpretation, to 660 AD). As a caliph, Abū

¹³ For the war code of Islam and the institution of *Al-Ghanā'im* distribution among the State Central Treasury (*Bayt al-Māl*) and Muslim warriors, see: Qur'an, Sūra *Al-Hashr* (59:7). Ibn Isḥāq, pp. 157–160, 239, 253sq, 256–57 (ed. T.A. Saad, T. Badawy). See also: H.I. Hassan, A.I. Hassan, *Islamic...* pp. 251–255.

¹⁴ Ibn Hishām, vol. II, p. 283; Tabarī, *Tarikh*, II, 457 (ed. Cairo 1961); Ibn al-Athīr, *Uṣd al-ghābah*, II, 130.

¹⁵ Qur'an, 8:1.

¹⁶ Jahshīyārī, p. 12; Ibn al-Athīr, *Uṣd al-ghābah*, III, p. 304.

¹⁷ Ph.K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, New York–London 1970, p. 139sq; F.M. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, Princeton 1981, pp. 91–220, 251–272; H. Badawy *Introduction...*, pp. 155sq, 158–163; H. Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests: How the Spread of Islam Changed the World We Live in*, London 2007, *passim*; R.G. Hoyland, *In God's Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire*, Oxford 2015, *passim*.

¹⁸ *Al-khulafā'u Ar-rāshidūn* or "the rightful successors of the Prophet Muḥammad".

Bakr took over all the functions performed earlier by Muḥammad. Thus, he continued the Prophet's activities, especially in the field of administration and economy, unlike his successor and the second caliph 'Umar (643–644), referred to as "innovator" (*al-mubtadi*; المبتدع). During the reign of Abū Bakr the country was economically weak, while in the time of 'Umar, it entered a period of economic prosperity. According to the sources, in his speech on assuming the office of caliph, Abū Bakr said:

I have been given the authority over you, and I am not the best of you. If I do well, help me; and if I do wrong, set me right. Sincere regard for truth is loyalty and disregard for truth is treachery. The weak amongst you shall be strong with me until I have secured his rights, if God wills; and the strong amongst you shall be weak with me until I have wrested from him the rights of others, if God wills. Obey me so long as I obey God and His Messenger. But if I disobey God and His Messenger, you owe me no obedience. Arise for your prayer, God have mercy upon you.¹⁹

The reign of Abū Bakr lasted about 27 months. Although it was short, it left its mark in history, especially due to the restoration of unity of the Arab tribes and the initiation of the invasion of two contemporary empires: the Byzantine Empire and the Sassanid lands. Having stabilised the situation on the peninsula and finished the so-called "Wars of Apostasy" (*hurūb al-ridḍa*; حروب الردة)²⁰, Abū Bakr (known to the Byzantines as Abubacharos)²¹ sent troops against his powerful neighbours. Therefore, he initiated the actions which, within a century, led to the creation of one of the biggest empires in history. Thus, he did not have much time to manage the matters of the state, which meant that he had to depend on his advisors. One of them was 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, the subsequent caliph (634–644).

'Umar, the second caliph, continued the policy of conquest²². In 634 AD (13 AH) he conquered Syria²³, in 636 (15 AH) he took Palestine²⁴ and,

¹⁹ M. Riḍāh, *Al-khulafā ar-rāshidūn*, ed. Al-Shaykh Kh. M. Shihā, Bajrut 2007, p. 25, f. 4:

"إنيها للناس قد وليت عليكم، ولست بخيركم، فإن أحسنت فأعينوني، وإن أسأت فقوموني، الصدق أمانة، والكذب خيانة، والضعيف فيكم قوي عندي حتى أخذ له حقّه، والقوي عندي ضعيف حتى أخذ منه الحق، إن شاء الله تعالى، لا يدع أحد منكم الجهاد، فإنه لا يدينه قوم إلا ضربهم الله بالمثل، أطيعوني ما أطعت الله ورسوله فإذا عصيت الله ورسوله فلا طاعة لي عليكم، قوموا إلى صلاتكم رحمكم الله."

²⁰ Balādhurī, *Fūṭuh*, pp. 113–120, 125–128. See also: Q. I. Muḥammad, *Al-Siyāsah al-mālīyah li-Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddīq*, Cairo 1990, pp. 99, 101, 123–131.

²¹ Theophanes, AM 6124, 6125, p. 336.

²² The commendable acts and traits of 'Umar were numerous, warranting the work of many scholars who authored chapters, books and volumes in praise of his great virtues and achievements. Many scholars wrote about 'Umar to an extent that some scholars authored a whole book specifically about his virtues and deeds. Among them were Ibn al-Djawzī, who authored a bulky book compiling Umar's laudable deeds and Al-Suyūṭī.

²³ Balādhurī, *Fūṭuh*, p. 128.

²⁴ Balādhurī, *Fūṭuh*, p. 164.

after the battle of Al-Kadisiya, Iraq²⁵. At the beginning of the fifth decade of the century his army entered Egypt and then the Byzantine Exarchate of Africa²⁶. During the reign of the caliphs who followed the Arab expansion led to the enlargement of the territory of the country, which eventually embraced the eastern part of the Mediterranean, including Cyprus and the neighbouring lands²⁷ and most of the Sassanid Empire. The borders of the new country reached the Indus River in the East, the Oxus River (Amu Darya) in the North and the West African coast of the Atlantic Ocean (*Bilād Al-Maghrib*; بلاد المغرب). Early Arabic sources mention neither Muslim settlements nor any strongholds from the pre-Umayyad period on the Iberian Peninsula.

It is obvious that such a rapid expansion created of a totally new political and economical reality. The Muslim *umma* left its previous boundaries and formed a huge country. The grandeur of the treasures obtained by the Arabs in wars they fought can be exemplified by the conquest of Al-Madā'in (Ctesiphon, the capital city of the Sassanid state) in 637 AD. The Muslims are believed to have found there gold and silver tableware and *carpets of the length of 60 ells, embroidered with gold and jewels*²⁸. In another place, known as Djalūlā', the Arabs captured reportedly 30 million dinars, one fifth of which, i.e. 6 million, was, in accordance with the rules of Qur'ān, sent to the caliph²⁹. He then distributed the money to the faithful³⁰. After the conquest of the city of Nahāvand in 641 AD, the invaders would win the great treasures of king Khusraw³¹.

The war spoils impressed the Muslims – caliph 'Umar is said to have had tears in his eyes when he saw the amount of riches, gold, silver and precious stones in the mosque awaiting distribution³². In this emergent situation, the ruler had to take certain measures which would enable him to control, organise and legislate the distribution of goods. Thanks to them – especially in the areas where state organisation, incorporating a financial system, was known – the territories previously belonging to Byzantium or Persia – the first Islamic institutions started to emerge³³.

²⁵ Balādhurī, *Fūtuḥ*, p. 295.

²⁶ Balādhurī, *Fūtuḥ*, pp. 249–267.

²⁷ Balādhurī, *Fūtuḥ*, pp. 128–131, 181–187.

²⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, IV, 17.

²⁹ Ph.K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs...*, p. 157. The Qur'ān defines the detail for the distribution of the booty among the warriors and the Public Treasury – *Bayt al-Māl*.

³⁰ Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, IV, 29; Ph.K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs...*, pp. 155–159.

³¹ Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, IV, 116–117; Ph.K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs...*, pp. 156–157.

³² Abū 'Ubayd, pp. 355–356.

³³ Primary Arabic sources, the multilingual papyri emphatically included, reveal the great influences of the former Byzantine administrative and financial system on the newborn Arab

Therefore, 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb is considered to be the founder of the organisation of the Muslim state. From the historical perspective, his policy contributed to ensuring the continuity of function of the formerly Byzantine administration, including the tax system in the area of Syria, Palestine and Egypt under the reign of new rulers. Texts written on papyruses, particularly those which are bilingual, prove the great influence of the Byzantine tradition on the organisation of the early Muslim country.

The result of the conquests was the multiplication of the Arabs' wealth³⁴. Information about the fortunes of a couple of participants of the described events can attest to this statement. For example, one of Muḥammad's commanders, and his close associate at the same time, Al-Zubayr Ibn al-'Awwām died leaving 52 thousand dinars and 53 million dirhams. Similarly, 'Uthmān ibn Affan (644–656) left 150 thousand dinars and 1 million dirham in addition to an estate worth 100 thousand dinars³⁵.

Islamic Caliphate, from its very beginnings, especially in Egypt after its Arab conquest. Such intense presence of the former Byzantine administration is apparently noted not only in the scope of multidisciplinary use of Byzantine terminology, which is of great importance, but mainly in the use of the Greek language in their official correspondence. For more details see: A.J. Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the Last Thirty Years of Roman Dominion*, Oxford 1902, p. 391; H.I. Bell, *The Administration of Egypt under the Umayyads*, BZ 28, 1928, pp. 278–286; A. Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri in the Egyptian Library*, vol. I–VI, Cairo 1934; N. Abbott, *The Kurrāh Papyri from Aphrodito in the Oriental Institute*, Chicago 1938; G. Rouillard, *L'Administration civile de l'Égypte Byzantine*, Paris 1949; A. Grohmann, *From the World of Arabic Papyri*, vol. I–II, Cairo 1952; J. Karayannopoulos, *Die Entstehung der byzantinischen Themenordnung*, München 1959; E. Ashdor, *A Social and Economic History of the Near East in the Middle Ages*, Berkeley 1976; H. Badawy, *The Administrative Organization of Egypt after the Arab Conquest. Similarities and Differences to the Byzantine Model*, Thessaloniki 1994, pp. 70–75; Y. Hilloowala, *The History of the Conquests of Egypt, Being a Partial Translation of Ibn Abd Al-Hakam's Futuh Misr and an Analysis of this Translation*, Tucson 1998 [unpublished PhD thesis]; E. Dimitriadou Badawy, *Command Route in Egypt According to Edictum XIII of Justinian and Umar Ibn Al-Khattab's Correspondence (527–634 AD)*, [in:] *Historiography in Egypt 284–641 AD. Historical, Ecclesiastical, Documentary, and Archaeological Evidence. The Second International Conference on Christian Egypt, Cairo 5–7 May 2015* (forthcoming); H. Badawy, *Byzantium post-Byzantium in Egypt after the Arab conquest. Continuity or discontinuity?*, [in:] *Life in Egypt during the Coptic Period. The First International Coptic Studies Conference* (forthcoming).

³⁴ See also: E. Ashdor, *Social and Economic...*, pp. 22–26.

³⁵ Mas'ūdī, II, 341. It is worth mentioning that caliph 'Uthmān was very rich and great businessman of pre-Islamic Mecca–Makkah. After the rise of Islam he became also great sponsor of the Islamic movement.

2.2. Creation of Bayt al-Māl – a Central Financial Institution of the Country

It is supposed that the first caliph, Abū Bakr, established an institution whose role was to manage the common wealth of the forming Muslim country³⁶. It is possible that it was a consequence of the increase in revenues of the administration of Medina, after the conquests of the territories of Syria and Mesopotamia. As Al-Suyūṭī wrote, Abū Bakr:

possessed unguarded *Bayt al-Māl* in Sankh, a district of Medina, where he had his house. The caliph was asked: *why do you not appoint a guard?* And he answered: *Bayt al-Māl has got a lock and I will give all it contains to people, as long as it [the treasury – ed.] is not empty.* And when he moved to Medina, he also moved the *Bayt al-Māl* to his house.³⁷

Al-Ḳalkashandī confirmed this fact, pointing out that the caliph-to-be governed the *Bayt al-Māl* during the reign of Abū Bakr. Therefore, this institution must have been created before the second caliph took power³⁸.

ʿUmar fostered the title of *Amīr al-Muʾminīn*, “Prince-Commander of the faithful” (أمير المؤمنين), willing to project his utterly different idea of the state³⁹. Once the caliphate guaranteed itself regular income from taxes, which happened as a result of ʿUmar’s decision to leave lands in the conquered territories in the hands of their previous owners⁴⁰, as long as they paid *kharāj* (الخراج) and poll tax, *ḍjizya* (ضريبة الرأس – الجزية) – the *Bayt al-Māl* had to become an independent institution, the central treasury of the state⁴¹. Apart from the institutional meaning, the term “House of Money” could also be understood literally, denoting the building in which collected goods could be kept safely. Once a year the treasury was visited by the caliph, which was mentioned by Ibn al-Djawzī⁴². The headquarters of *Bayt al-Māl* acquired a new political significance when, after ʿUmar’s death, the new caliph was chosen⁴³.

³⁶ Q.I. Muḥammad, *Al-Siyasah...*, pp. 9–11, 358sqq.

³⁷ Suyūṭī, 79; Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghābah*, II, 422.

³⁸ Ḳalkashandī, I, 413.

³⁹ Ibn al-Djawzī, *Manakib*, pp. 43–48, 59–60; H. Badawy, *The Administrative Organization...*, pp. 54–65.

⁴⁰ Idem, *Introduction...*, pp. 163–168.

⁴¹ Abū Yaʿla, 188; Abū Yūsuf, 24; Balādhurī, *Futuh*, 325; Ibn al-Djawzī, *Manakib*, 94; Abū ʿUbayd, 83; Yaḥyā Ibn Ādam, p. 27.

⁴² Ibn al-Djawzī, *Akbar*, 106.

⁴³ Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, V, 21; Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghābah*, III, 68.

'Umar believed to codify the rules of collecting *kharāj* (depending on harvest and the cost of irrigation) and *ḍjizya*, paid by the People of the Book ('*Ahl al-Kitāb*'; '*Ahl az-dhimma*'; أهل الكتاب - أهل الذمة). The latter has ever since been paid depending on individual income. Today we could say that three income tax thresholds existed: the wealthiest paid 48 dirhams, the moderately rich 24, and the poorest 12 dirhams⁴⁴. It must be emphasised, though, that during the reign of the first Umayyads, the terms *kharāj* and *ḍjizya* were used interchangeably and meant simply tribute. Not until the end of this dynasty's reign were these two words distinguished and their meanings systematised.

The transition from tributes collected during a war to the duty paid in cash in the areas where military actions were over caused the need to create *Bayt al-Māl* and forced the authorities to investigate the way in which similar institutions functioned in neighbouring countries. On the conquered northern territories of Syria and Mesopotamia the first tribute in cash was collected in 640 AD (20 AH), after the end of military operations. It was not a coincidence that in the same year 'Umar called upon an institution referred to as office or council (*al-dīwān*; الديوان)⁴⁵.

A novelty in the economic policy of 'Umar was the diversification of remunerations paid from *Bayt al-Māl*⁴⁶ – during the reign of Abū Bakr the faithful had the right to equal shares⁴⁷. Caliph 'Umar carried out a census and created a kind of "property qualification", which divided those entitled to take advantage of *Bayt al-Māl* into several categories. As it was mentioned by Al-Ṭabarī⁴⁸, 'Umar appointed three Quraysh secretaries ordering them to make a record of all the people, starting from the family of the Prophet. The criteria determining the amount of received benefits depended on the following factors: faithfulness to the principles of Islam, the period of affiliation to the *umma*, the level of wealth at the moment of converting to Islam and needs after the conversion. Each category had a proportional share in *Bayt al-Māl*. This practice was also continued by the third caliph, 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān, while his successor 'Alī re-established the rule of treating all Muslims equally, which was practised by Abū Bakr⁴⁹.

⁴⁴ During his reign in Medina (622–632), Muḥammad established a tax at the level of 1 dinar per year per person.

⁴⁵ Māwardī, 199; Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, IV, 209; Ibn Ṭabāṭabā, 83; Ibn Khaldūn, II, 17; Balādhurī, *Futuh*, 550; Ibn al-Djawzī, *Manakib*, pp. 99–111.

⁴⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, IV, 210; Māwardī, 200; Abū Ya'la, 221; Abū Yūsuf, 46; M. Ridāh, *Al-Khulafaa Al-Rashidun...*, pp. 118–121sq; H. Badawy, *Introduction...*, pp. 163–165, f. 342–343.

⁴⁷ Ibn al-Athīr, *Uṣd al-ghābah*, II, 422.

⁴⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, IV, 210; Māwardī, 200; Abū Ya'la, 221; Abū Yūsuf, 46.

⁴⁹ Abū Ya'la, 222.

"The House of Money" faced a serious trial during the reign of caliph 'Uthmān (644–656), and his policy of dividing the resources of *Bayt al-Māl* according to his own judgement – he is believed to have said: *This is the money of God. I can give it to anyone I want and take it away from anyone I please*⁵⁰ – led to the rise of opposition and resulted in a rebellion against the ruler⁵¹. Unlike 'Uthmān, 'Ālī – the fourth of the caliphs (656–661) – tried to reinstate the rule of equal shares from the times of Muḥammad and Abū Bakr⁵². It was, however, an anachronistic solution in the context of the complex social system of the Muslim state. In comparison with the era of Muḥammad and his first successors, the administrative machine was already well developed. Therefore, the rules the *Bayt al-Māl's* operation were distant from tribal laws. This institution managed both the private wealth of the caliph and public property.

Because of the lack of the Arabic model of economic policy, a Persian administrative system was employed on the ethnically and religiously homogenous Arabian Peninsula, while Syria and Egypt adopted the Byzantine system based on old imperial civil service. This situation continued until the reign of 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwān, who replaced the Byzantine and Persian solutions with a new model based on Arab officials and so-called *mawālī* (Muslims non-Arab). This forced Arabisation of the administration⁵³. The stabilisation of the monarchy by Umayyad caliphs, resulted in the transformation of *Bayt al-Māl* from a religiously-driven treasury (of the faithful), to a State Treasury⁵⁴.

2.3. Headquarters of Bayt al-Māl

Sources do not indicate explicitly where the headquarters of *Bayt al-Māl* were located. In the time of Abū Bakr, "The House of Money" was probably situated in his home in Medina⁵⁵. However, after conquests and the territorial expansion of the country, the amount of revenues received by *Bayt al-Māl* convinced 'Umar to move the headquarters to the great mosque

⁵⁰ Maḳḍisī, V, 202.

⁵¹ Ya'ḳūbī, II, 93; Ibn al-Djawzī, *Manakib*, 101; Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, IV, 226, 283; Maḳḍisī, V, 202; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, V, 52–53; Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghābah*, III, 114–115.

⁵² Djāḥiẓ, 242; Iṣṭakhrī, 54.

⁵³ Ibn Khaldūn, II, 18; Māwardī, 202–203; Djahshiyārī, 38; Nuwayrī, VIII, 198. On the Islamization of the conquered communities see: I. Harakat, *Al-Siyasah wa Al-Mugtama' fi Al-Asr Al-Amawi*, Morocco 1990, pp. 143–148, 151–153.

⁵⁴ I. Harakat, *Al-Siyasah...*, pp. 256–325; H. Badawy, *Introduction...*, pp. 190–193.

⁵⁵ Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghābah*, II, 422.

in Al-Kūfa⁵⁶. The construction of the mosque was commissioned in 638 AD (17 AH) to one of his commanders (Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās). Opposite the building, within a distance of only 200 cubits, *Bayt al-Māl* and the house of Sa'd were located⁵⁷.

According to other sources the building was situated near *Dār al-Imāra* (دار الامارة), the headquarters of the administration, close to that mosque. From other accounts it can be concluded that it could have been located inside the temple. This seems likely, as in Islam the main mosque of a city (often called the Great Mosque or Friday Mosque) was a practical centre of lawmaking, exercising justice and finance management. It was also the teaching centre the meeting place of the local community and the authorities⁵⁸. The *Bayt al-Māl*'s building acquired a separate importance when the seniors met therein to elect a new caliph after the death of 'Umar⁵⁹.

2.4. Management of Bayt al-Māl

The office in charge of *Bayt al-Māl* – the *Diwān Bayt al-Māl* – was considered to be the most important part of administration⁶⁰. It was managed by the caliph himself, who had full authority over the institution⁶¹. Thus he could, at least theoretically, allocate the gathered resources however he wanted. The Umayyads used the collected riches to demonstrate their power, generosity and luxury. Also the Abbasids were a rather high-spending dynasty⁶². The staff of the office of the *Bayt al-Māl* consisted of representatives of Islamised non-Arabic tribes ("clients", *mawālī*), especially those of a Persian origin, as well as Christians and Jews⁶³.

⁵⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, IV, 135.

⁵⁷ Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghābah*, VII, 75; Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, IV, 45; M. Rida, *Al-khulafā'...*, pp. 155–157, 187–188, 280–281.

⁵⁸ Maḳdisī, 157; Ibn Rusta, 116; A. Mez, *Islamic Civilization...*, pp. 220–221; E. Tyan, *Histoire de l'organisation de pays d'Islam*, Lubnan 1960, p. 406.

⁵⁹ Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. V, p. 21; Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghābah*, III, p. 68.

⁶⁰ A. Mez, *Islamic Civilization...*, p. 131.

⁶¹ A. S. Amir, *Muchtasar tarich Al-Arab wa-at-tamadun al-islami*, Cairo 1938, p. 349.

⁶² Ibn Hudjdja al-Ḥamawī, 315; Mas'ūdī, III, 344; Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, VIII, 252–253; Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghābah*, VI, 433–434; L. A. Sidi ju (Sedillot), *Tarikh Al-Arab al-aam*, Cairo 1948, p. 223.

⁶³ A. von Kremer, *The Islamic Civilization and the Extent to Which it Has Been Influenced by Foreign Ideas*, Cairo 1947, p. 78; J. Wellhausen, *Das arabische Reich und sein Sturz*, Cairo 1958, pp. 27–31.

As it has already been mentioned, under the reign of the first rules of the Umayyad dynasty, the administrative issues of many regions were still in the hands of the Byzantines and the Persians. During the reign of Mu'āwiya I, the founder of this dynasty, the governor of Iraq was accused of employing the Persians to collect *kharāj*. He defended himself by saying:

When I employed the Arabs and they did not fulfil their duties, they claimed that I offended their tribe by lowering their wages and thus hurt them. If I leave them without supervision, it will mean that I do not care about the God's money (المال العام مال الله). Therefore, I concluded that the Persians are the best at collecting taxes, the most reliable.⁶⁴

Using the services of non-Arabic Muslims, especially representatives of the People of the Book continued during the reign of the Abbasids. Abū Al-'Abbās as-Saffāh, the first caliph from the Abbasid dynasty, left Khālīd Ibn Barmak, for whom he had great respect, in the office of the head of *Dīwān al-Kharāj* (ديوان الخراج) and *Dīwān Al-Jund* (military – ديوان الجند) until 752 AD (135 AH)⁶⁵. It was probably prohibited, or at least looked upon with reluctance, to appoint representatives of the People of the Book to offices in Mecca. It is possible that the contemporary law which forbids non-Muslims to enter the city is a simple continuation of the steps taken in the times of the Abbasids. This issue is still awaiting a research.

2.5. Revenues of *Bayt al-Māl*

The main source of income for the caliphate was the tax called *fay'* (الفي), mentioned in Sūra 59 of the Qur'an entitled *The Gathering*⁶⁶ (*Al-Hashr*; سورة الحشر), which described the conflict with the Banū Naḍīr tribe⁶⁷. According to the definition, *fay'* consisted of all tributes collected in circumstances other than war with the infidels, such as income from tributes specified in international treaties, poll tax and revenues from *kharāj*⁶⁸, i.e.:

⁶⁴ Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV, 109; Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, V, 522–523.

⁶⁵ Djahshiyārī, 89; Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, VII, 458, 460, 465, 467.

⁶⁶ Qur'an, 59.

⁶⁷ Ibn Taymiyya, p. 38; Balādhurī, *Futuh*, vol. I. pp. 18–23, Ibn Hishām, pp. 121–136.

⁶⁸ Māwardī, 126; Abū Ya'la, 120; Yaḥyā Ibn Ādam, 18; Abū 'Ubayd, 361; Qur'an, *Al-Anfal*; Ibn Hishām, pp. 277–291; F. Lokkegaard, *Fay'*, [in:] *EI*, vol. II,

that which was obtained without force in a conquered city (mainly real estate) – unlike war spoils gained in battles, including movables and goods referred to as *ghanima* (غنيمة);

- poll tax, paid by those who, in Qurʾān, were called the People of the Book⁶⁹;
- double *zakāt* paid by the tribe of Banū Taghlib, according to an agreement made with caliph ʿUmar⁷⁰;
- taxes on goods belonging to merchants who originated from the People of the Book;
- taxes on goods, paid by infidels who entered the territory of the Islamic country⁷¹.

An important role in the system of *fayʿ* was played by *kharāj*, which was regarded as the oldest tax of the Islamic world, having been collected since the time of ʿUmar, in a scope that was proportional to the area of the land owned. *Kharāj* was probably defined by caliphs⁷², as the Qurʾān did not mention it – in the time of the Prophet the needs of Islam were catered for by war spoils (*al-ghanāʾim*). *Kharāj* was collected from three kinds of estates:

- lands abandoned by previous owners and cultivated by Muslims⁷³;
- lands obtained by force, which belonged to Islam (*wakf*)⁷⁴;
- lands granted on the basis of an agreement or a treaty – in such a case the amount of the tax depended on the size of the area, location and the volume of production⁷⁵.

The poll tax, *djizya* (الجزية) also belonged to the *fayʿ* system. The etymology of the name is not certain. Some researchers claim that the word is of Persian origin, while others say that it comes from an Arabic term *djazaʾ* whose semantic scope was very wide and denoted either a punishment or a reward (literally “pay-back”)⁷⁶. *Djizya* was imposed on infidels inhabiting the territory of the caliphate, with the exception of women, children, the demented and monks. The exemption also applied to the blind, disabled, chronically ill, unable to work, the elderly, idolaters and apostates⁷⁷. In the first years of Islam *djizya* did not apply to

pp. 869–870; Ph.K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs...*, pp. 170, 172; I.A. Al-Aḍawī, *Al-Nuzum...*, pp. 241–242.

⁶⁹ Šūlī, 198.

⁷⁰ Šūlī, 199; Balādhurī, *Fūtuḥ*, 217; Yaḥyā Ibn Ādam, 62.

⁷¹ Šūlī, 199; Abū ʿUbayd, 25.

⁷² Māwardī, 146; Abū Yaʿla, 146.

⁷³ Ṭabarī, *Ikhtilaf*, 224; Māwardī, 138; Abū Yaʿla, 132.

⁷⁴ Ṭabarī, *Ikhtilaf*, 224; Māwardī, 138; Abū Yaʿla, 132.

⁷⁵ Ṭabarī, *Ikhtilaf*, 218; Māwardī, 138; Abū Yaʿla, 130–131.

⁷⁶ Māwardī, 142; Abū Yaʿla, 137.

⁷⁷ Māwardī, 144; Abū Yaʿla, 138; Abū Yūsuf, 127; Balādhurī, *Fūtuḥ*, 76; Ṭabarī, *Ikhtilaf*, 207.

the Arabs who remained faithful to their polytheistic religion – they were faced with a choice: conversion to Islam or death⁷⁸. Later, when the Muslim country was also inhabited by Jews and Christians, *djizya* applied to them too, since it was considered to be a fee which guaranteed the protection of Muḥammad himself⁷⁹. The tax differed in amount for particular tribes and areas. During the reign of caliph 'Umar, the inhabitants of Syria paid *djizya* in the amount of 4 dinars, while in the As-Sawād province (south Mesopotamia) it was at the level of 48, 24 or 12 dirhams respectively, depending on wealth⁸⁰.

There were many attempts to change the amount of *djizya*. Mu 'āwiya wanted to increase it for the Copts. The governor of Iraq, Muḥammad al-Ḥajjaj ibn Yūsuf (641–714) imposed it on those who converted to Islam. His decisions were revoked by caliph 'Umar II Ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, who ruled between 717 and 720 AD. In his letter to the governor of Egypt we can read that *the Prophet of God was not sent as a collector of tributes but as a proponent of faith in God*⁸¹. In 924 AD (312 AH) another attempt was made at extending the scope of the tax, by its imposition on monks and the sick. This initiative, however, was not successful⁸². In conjunction with the expansion of Islam, *djizya*, paid at the end of each year, lost its meaning as a source of state income⁸³. *Zakāt* (الزكاة) was a form of obligatory charity collected from wealthy Muslims. In the religious sense it was supposed to cleanse the believers.

Zakāt in the tradition of Islam is more than just an ordinary tax. It plays a significant role both in the spiritual and social sense (*Dār al-Islām*; دار الاسلام). Rather than being treated as a source of state revenue, it is one of the pillars of religion, often mentioned in the Qur'ān⁸⁴ and in ḥadīths. According to its principles, *zakāt* is collected and distributed to the poor at a local level⁸⁵. At the beginning of its existence it was probably a form of intertribal alms. For this reason caliph 'Umar approved of collecting double *zakāt* (*ṣadaqa*) from Arabic Christians of the Banū Taghlib tribe instead of *djizya*, when they threatened to leave *Dār al-Islām*⁸⁶.

⁷⁸ Abū 'Ubayd, 27.

⁷⁹ Qur'ān, 29; Balādhurī, *Fūṭuh*, 71.

⁸⁰ Abū 'Ubayd, 55, 56, 98, 198; Şūlī, 215; Abū Yūsuf, 124; Balādhurī, *Fūṭuh*, 326.

⁸¹ Ibn al-Djawzī, *Akbar*, p. 132.

⁸² Ibn Biṭrīk, p. 83.

⁸³ Kudāma ibn Dja'far, p. 251.

⁸⁴ Qur'ān, 7, 156; 19, 31; 9, 5; 21, 72; 23, 4; 27, 3; 30, 39; 31, 3; 41, 7.

⁸⁵ Māwardī, 120; Abū 'Ubayd, 595.

⁸⁶ Balādhurī, *Fūṭuh*, 216–218; Abū 'Ubayd, 722–723.

Finally, the revenues of the Islamic state were supported by a tax called '*ushr*' (العشر), i.e. fees for importing and exporting goods, amounting to one tenth of their value; thus it can be compared to the tithe, known from other ancient and medieval tax systems. 'Umar was the first to impose such fees⁸⁷. Muslim lawyers opposed the caliph, indicating that this tax was borrowed from infidels and thus it originated from outside the *Dār al-Islām*.

There was also another type of this specific tithe, referred to as '*ushr al-arḍ*' (عشر الأرض), which can be translated as "land tithe", imposed by Muḥammad himself. This fee was equivalent to one tenth of the value of the land, if the land was *watered with rain* and did not require irrigation, or one twentieth if it required artificial irrigation. This tax is sometimes perceived as a type of *zakāt*⁸⁸. With the expansion of Islam, the tithe became the main source of income for the state.

Apart from the above-mentioned taxes, the state obtained revenues from baths, graveyards and inns. In subsequent periods, mills and public houses were also taxed⁸⁹. During the reign of the Abbasids, the caliph started to take over properties of those who did not have any heirs. This source of income, however, was surely not of a regular nature⁹⁰. Despite the existence of all of the above mentioned taxes there were moments in which the *Bayt al-Māl* was not able to face up to the financial needs of the state.

2.6. Public Spending

The earliest state expenditure was allocated for remuneration of Muslim soldiers. It was a kind of an irregular state benefit ('*aṭā'*, العطاء)⁹¹, which was supposed to enable them to cater for their basic needs. The '*aṭā'*' system lets us understand the economic situation of the Muslim state in its early period. In granting it, the orthodox caliphs acted in accordance with tribal reasoning⁹². The resources were divided evenly – during the reign of Abū Bakr and 'Ālī – or according to certain established norms, previously mentioned, under 'Umar's rule. These benefits were paid from the resources accrued in the *Bayt al-Māl* according to

⁸⁷ Abū 'Ubayd, 713.

⁸⁸ Balādhurī, *Fūṭuh*, 85; Abū 'Ubayd, 644.

⁸⁹ Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, VII, 653; Ya'qūbī, III, 110.

⁹⁰ Ḳalkashandī, III, 460; Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, X, 44.

⁹¹ C. Cahen, '*aṭā'*' [in:] *EI*, vol. I, pp. 729–730; M. Ridāh, *Al-khulafā'...*, pp. 118–120; I. A. Al-Adawī, *Al-Nuzum...*, pp. 248–252.

⁹² Māwardī, p. 200; Abū Ya'la, p. 222; Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, vol. III, p. 614; Abū 'Ubayd, p. 335; Balādhurī, *Fūṭuh*, p. 557; Maḳrīzī, p. 151.

the following rule: *pay emirs and warrant officers, who will pay scribes, representatives and secretaries and they will pay beneficiaries of their households*⁹³. During the reign of the Umayyads and the Abbasids the division of revenues was utilised in the political struggle for keeping the power⁹⁴.

Under the rule of the Abbasids *ʿaṭā* was replaced with *arzāk* (الرزاق) – a permanent salary for officials and soldiers⁹⁵. *Arzāk* was also paid to all those who served at the caliph's court. The payment covered both the salary and a kind of debenture that could later be exchanged for its value in cash⁹⁶.

When the institution of state finances became fully established, the resources from the "House of Money" were used for the following purposes:

- the construction of public structures (mosques, canals, dams, etc.)⁹⁷;
- securing the needs of the population (providing food during droughts, for pilgrims and people during Ramadan, and accommodation for travellers)⁹⁸;
- funding the army and building military infrastructure (supplies, equipment, supporting units – needed for suppressing rebellions – and maintenance of frontier fortifications)⁹⁹;
- creating an intelligence network, which quickly (during the reign of ʿUthmān) became an important state institution, comparable to today's secret service¹⁰⁰.

It ought to be explained that in the entire discourse concerning the expenses of *Bayt al-Māl*, only the area of the Arabian Peninsula is taken into account, although taxes were collected from all the provinces of the country. The management of incomes and expenses of the treasury was decentralised. After covering the costs of the functioning of provinces, all the surplus was sent to the "House of Money"¹⁰¹.

⁹³ Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, IV, 49; Maḳrīzī, I, 150.

⁹⁴ Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, vol. VII, pp. 161, 426; Ṣūlī, p. 224; Maḳrīzī, p. 151; Ibn al-Athīr, *Tarikh*, vol. V, p. 291; vol. VIII, p. 143 (ed. Beirut 1956).

⁹⁵ Ibn al-Athīr, *Uṣd al-ghābah*, VI, 221.

⁹⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, VIII, 95; III, 615; Saʿalibi, pp. 18, 22; Balādhurī, *Fūtuḥ*, pp. 210, 564; Māwardī, 202; Abū Yaʿla, 223; Ṣābiʿ, p. 289; Ibn Manẓūr, I, 457.

⁹⁷ Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, VII, 655; X, 711; Maḳkī, vol. III, p. 257; Maḳdisī, 121; Ibn Kathīr, *Tarikh*, XI, 68; Ṣābiʿ, 280.

⁹⁸ Ibn Kathīr, *Tarikh*, VII, 90; Maḳrīzī, I, 151; Yaʿḳūbī, II, 29; Maḳkī, III, 202; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, V, 112; Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, VI, 327, 567; VIII, 142.

⁹⁹ Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, VIII, 44; IX, 57, 645; X, 410; Ibn al-Athīr, *Uṣd al-ghābah*, VI, 57; Ibn Kathīr, *Tarikh*, X, 147, 287; XI, 150.

¹⁰⁰ Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, VIII, 96, 157, 158; Ibn Kathīr, *Tarikh*, X, 147–148.

¹⁰¹ Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, X, 269; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, V, 220; Ibn al-Athīr, *Uṣd al-ghābah*, V, 291; Ibn Ṭabāṭabā, 136.

Establishing the Muslim administration was a long-lasting and complex process. It led to the creation of a complicated administrative machine alongside the caliph and his direct advisors. The Arab expansion resulted in the need to create an organisational model, which, at least at the beginning of the nation's existence, was based on the structure of a military unit. In the early expansion period of Islam, the administration had to be autonomous and self-sufficient, in part because of the geographical dispersion of the country and the lack of means of transport, but also due to the character of the local soil and specific needs of Arab soldiers, which were different from the requirements of the local communities. On the conquered lands a representative of the caliph, a military commander, who also possessed civil power, organised the economic administration in a military way.

The stabilisation of the borders of the Muslim state in the Middle East and the limitation of war expenses resulted in a budgetary surplus, both from war spoils and taxes. These resources were transported to the capital of the caliphate and collected in *Bayt al-Māl*.

The basic question that emerged at the very beginning of existence of this institution concerned the distribution of the collected goods. Its later utilisation for the operations of the state (the army, public works, social policy, and administration) led to a deficit. However, this process occurred only after the division of resources into private (*Bayt al-Māl al-khāṣṣa*; بيت مال الخاصة) and public funds (*Bayt al-Māl al-'Amma*; بيت المال العامة), the latter similar to a state treasury; as has been mentioned, this took place during the reign of Mu'āwiya. The implications of the separation private and public funds became visible when the caliph demanded that abandoned areas on the conquered territories to be regarded as his own property.

The reign of the Umayyad dynasty (661–750) was crucial for shaping the administrative (and economic) system of the caliphate. At that time the model of a nation changed from religious-military to political. It was also then that the nomadic lifestyle of the people was replaced by a settled one, as the conquered tribes were subjected to Arabisation and Islamisation. Stabilisation of the monarchy led to transformation of the “House of Money” from a religious treasury to a state one. The evolution of *Bayt al-Māl* can be divided into three periods:

- *Bayt al-Māl* of wartime, providing a simple way of sharing spoils;
- *Bayt al-Māl* of budgetary surplus, in the time of intensified Islamisation;
- the *Bayt al-Māl* of a developed state, an institution independent of the caliph and possessing its own mechanisms of operation.

In the third period the “House of Money” did not differ much from today's

ministry of finances, in which the resources do not come from war spoils, but from taxes imposed on citizens. It did not, however, have the right to create economic policy or any tools which would empower it.

When studying the history of the *Bayt al-Māl*, we also investigate the causes of changes occurring in the economic institutions, both at the time of Islamic expansion and in the period of stabilisation. Similarly, while analysing the evolution of the operations of the “House of Money”, we are able to learn about the development of the economic policy of the Muslim state.



3. Christian Communities in the Territories Conquered by the Arabs (the Seventh–Eighth Centuries)

The expansion of Islam in the first two centuries of its existence was quite unprecedented. Accompanied by the establishment of a new political order, it seemed to occur irrespective of whether Muḥammad was initially considered to be a prophet sent down for all mankind or for the Arabs only¹. The new religion spread rapidly not only because of military victories² – which it owed to the effort of all free, fit, and adult men who placed their trust in the Prophet³ – but also due to an attraction exercised by its religious formula and tolerance with which its followers treated the conquered population. An individual was to find happiness within the *umma*, the Muslim community, where everyone, at least formally, was to enjoy equal rights.

In the Middle East and North Africa, Christianity, partly due to the collapse of its political and theological unity, grew increasingly weak⁴. The Arab invaders found it disintegrated and tormented by theological disputes concerning the nature of the Christ. These religious controversies undermined the strength of both the Byzantine orthodoxy and the imperial rule as well. The main religious movements that emerged out of these controversies came to be known as

¹ S. B a s h e a r, *Arabs and Others in Early Islam*, Princeton 1997, pp. 1, 16 (where one can read the Prophet's words: *I shall be the head of all the seed of Adam*).

² The Arab viewpoint of the conquest is to be found in the selection of Arab chroniclers' accounts of the reigns of particular caliphs. F. W. B r o o k s, *The Arabs in Asia Minor (641–750) from Arabic Sources*, JHS 18, 1898, pp. 182–208.

³ In theory, military service was mandatory, but in practice it was possible to provide a replacement (*badil*). M. B o n n e r, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War. Studies in the Jihad and the Arab-Byzantine Frontier*, New Haven 1996, p. 11.

⁴ R. F l e t c h e r, *The Cross and the Crescent: The Dramatic Story of the Earliest Encounters between Christians and Muslims*, London 2004, p. 6.

Nestorianism and Monophysitism (the followers of the latter were often called the Jacobites)⁵. At the turn of the sixth and seventh centuries, the authorities' attempts to advance one more definition of the Christ, rather than healing religious divisions, resulted in the outbreak of further schisms⁶.

Both the Byzantine Church and Roman emperors vehemently fought eastern heresies. In the Islamic state, the position of the Jacobites and the Nestorians, whom new rulers treated better than they did the members of other Christian groups, was not bad. The security brought by the victorious Arabs to the life of religious communities in Egypt and the Middle East was something of which these communities, refusing to accept the Chalcedonian creed, could not dream in Byzantium. Upon entering Jerusalem in 637, Caliph 'Umar, in undertaking to protect the Christians, uttered the following words: *I guarantee the safety of their life, their property, their children, their churches, their crosses and everything they have*⁷. It is worth noting that no Christian group was excluded from this pledge of protection. Of course, it was only the Jacobites and the Nestorians, persecuted in Byzantium, to whom the life under these guarantees was clearly an improvement on what they had experienced under Byzantine rule. For the orthodox Christians, who had previously enjoyed the support of the Byzantine authorities, the situation changed for the worse.

Regardless of what has been said above, it must be noted that the Muslims did not offer the Christians much that went beyond a relative safety – a general protection of life and property, and freedom of religion. Under Islamic law

⁵ R.M. Haddad, *Syrian Christians in Muslim Societies. An Interpretation*, Princeton 1970, p. 7. Today the Assyrian Church of the East and the Syrian Orthodox Church consider the names *Jacobites* and *Nestorians* to be derogative, preferring the use of two other terms: Assyrians and Arameans. However, in the first centuries after the advent of Islam the words in question did not carry pejorative connotations and were used by members of these groups themselves. And it is in this context that I use them in this chapter. At the same time the term Monophysites was coined by the Melkites in the eighth century and was designed to depreciate the opponents of the Chalcedon arrangements. In fact, the followers of some of the branches of the movement referred to as Monophysitism were Miaphysites (they did not deny Christ's human nature, as did the Monophysites, but believed that Jesus was one person with two natures, human and divine, which blended into one). J.A. Evans, *Justynian i imperium bizantyjskie*, transl. B. Godzińska, Warszawa 2008, p. 172.

⁶ There appeared, among others, the movement of the Monothelites. During the Crusades, it almost ceased to exist as his most important members, the Maronites, recognized the supreme authority of Rome. For more on the Maronites see: M. Moćh, *Swoi i obcy. Tożsamość Koptów i Maronitów w arabskich tekstach kultury*, Warszawa 2013, pp. 113–138.

⁷ J. Joseph, *Muslim Christian Relations and Inter Christian Rivalries in the Middle East. The Case of the Jacobites in an Age of Transition*, Albany 1983, p. 10.

the Christians were granted the status of the *dhimmī* (the protected minority)⁸. The *dhimmī* made up the group of second-class citizens. In addition, it is also necessary to distinguish between the formal status enjoyed by the Christians and the way in which they were actually treated. These may have been consistent with one another, but may also have been significantly different⁹. The Muslims enjoyed a privileged position. The Christians formed a distinct community and, as such, were subject to discrimination. Sometimes they had to wear humiliating dress setting them apart from the rest of the Muslim society. Sometimes their churches and monasteries were plundered and their property robbed by jealous neighbours. However, such injustice was not something to which they were regularly subjected. Some Muslim rulers and lawyers tried to provide the Christians with legal protection. Judged by the standards of the time, the Muslim conquerors were quite fair and tolerant¹⁰.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the life of Christian Churches in the seventh and eighth centuries in some of the areas conquered by the Arabs: the Levant, Mesopotamia, Egypt and the Caucasus. The paper is divided into two parts. The first aims to offer a general description of the life of all Christians remaining under Muslim rule, while the second, more analytical, deals with some specific Christian Churches existing in the Islamic state. Qur'anic comments concerning Christians and the treatment they received from the Muslims, as well as the way in which they responded to it, are discussed in the first part. As the social problems discussed in this contribution were deeply interconnected with theological ones, I address them both, intertwined¹¹. A separate discussion will be devoted to some language issues.

The second part deals with some Christian Churches that operated under Islamic rule: the West Syrian Church (the Jacobite Church), the East Syrian Church (the Nestorian Church), the Coptic Church, and the Armenian Church. I shall focus on the relations between the Arabs and the communities whose lands fell under Muslim domination, paying special attention to the Ar-

⁸ The term is usually used to refer to a pact of unlimited duration, under which the Muslim community offered hospitality and protection to the followers of other revealed religions (the Jews, the Christians and the Sabeans) as long as the latter were prepared to accept the Muslims' domination. C. Cahen, *Dhimma*, [in:] *EI*, vol. II, p. 227.

⁹ B. Ye'or, *Islam and Dhimmitude: Where Civilizations Collide*, Madison 2002, p. 21.

¹⁰ J. Joseph, *Muslim-Christian...*, p. 13. However, some scholars consider such a tolerant attitude to be nothing but a myth and, in trying to prove the opposite view, attempt to provide evidence of a great number of persecutions and humiliations suffered by both the Jews and the Christians alike. See: B. Ye'or, *Islam...*, pp. 89–102.

¹¹ M. Lewicka, *Od konfrontacji do dialogu – historia relacji pomiędzy chrześcijaństwem a islamem*, PR 2 (240), 2011, p. 138.

abs' relations with the Jacobites – the largest group living in the Syro-Palestine¹². The Nestorians were based mainly in Persia and Mesopotamia, and were not in any significant way connected with the region of Syria. In Egypt, religious controversies led to the emergence of two Christian Churches – the Melkite Church and the Coptic Church. The latter played a leading role in the whole province. From the perspective of Constantinople, these were all unorthodox churches, as was the Armenian one, the last to which I am going to devote my attention here. Its development was halted by the Persians who in turn were forced out of the region by the Arabs.

3.1. Christians in the *Qur'ān* and in the Teachings of Muḥammad

Pronounced in Muslim tradition are the Prophet's interactions with Christians¹³. So too is the fact that his advent was foretold in the Gospel¹⁴. In *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* by Ibn Ishāq, quoted by Goddard, there are five references to these encounters which took place on several occasions. These concerned:

- the Prophet's meeting with the Monk Bahīrā¹⁵;
- the Prophet's conversation with Waraqa Ibn Nawfal, a cousin of his wife Khadīdja;
- the refuge offered to the Muslims by a ruler of Aksum (Ethiopia/Abyssinia);
- the visit of a delegation of Christians from Nadjrān to Medina;
- the Prophet's letters to Christian rulers whose states bordered the Arab lands.

It is difficult to say whether our sources provide us with reliable accounts of Muḥammad's encounters with Christians. It is also impossible to determine the impact these contacts had upon the Prophet's religious views¹⁶. However, it

¹² R.M. Haddad, *Syrian Christians...*, p. 7.

¹³ *The Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue: A Collection of Documents from the First Three Islamic Centuries, 632–900 AD: Translations with Commentary*, ed. N.A. Newman, Hatfield 1993, pp. 1–2.

¹⁴ According to the *Qur'ān* (61:6), Jesus prophesied the coming of the Comforter (J 14,17; 16,12–14). The messenger was to be named Aḥmad (resemblance to the name Muḥammad). *Kur'ān*, p. 937. J. Nosowski, *Problem uwierzytelnienia posłannictwa Mahometa w świetle Koranu*, STV 1/2, 1964, p. 374.

¹⁵ In the tradition of Middle Eastern Christians this person is equated with Saint Sergius. For more on the figure see: B. Rogge, *The Legend of Sergius Bahira: Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam, The History of Christian-Muslim Relations*, Leiden–Boston 2009.

¹⁶ H. Goddard, *Historia stosunków chrześcijańsko-muzułmańskich*, transl. S. Zalewski, Warszawa 2009, pp. 32–36.

is quite plausible that some of them actually took place – for example, those in Aksum and Medina.

The main reason why the Prophet decided to host a delegation of Christians from Nadjran – of all his interactions with Christians the accounts of which are found in the sources this one is most likely to have actually occurred – was to persuade them to convert to Islam. However, the visitors refused to accept the offer. References to this event can be found in the *Qurʾān*:

Indeed the case of Jesus with Allah/ is like the case of Adam:/ He created him from dust,/ and said to him: *Be*, and he was./ This is the truth from your Lord,/ so do not be among the skeptics./ Should anyone argue with you concerning him,/ after the knowledge that has come to you/ say *Come!* Let us call our sons and your sons,/ our women and your women,/ our souls and your souls,/ then let us pray earnestly/ and call down Allah's curse upon the liars.¹⁷

The fragment quoted above can be considered to represent an exemplary way of presenting religious disputations in Muslim sources from the ninth and tenth centuries¹⁸. However, historical reality was not always fully consistent with the *Qurʾānic* tradition.

Some respect accorded to the People of the Book in the *Qurʾān*, as well as Muḥammad's private life, prove that the Prophet's attitude towards the Christians was not unambiguously negative. At the end of his life, he had a beautiful Coptic girl named Mary as his concubine¹⁹. The couple even had a son, Ibrāhīm. However, the boy died while still an infant, before reaching the age of two.

Although Christianity was present in the Arabian Peninsula long before the birth of Muḥammad, the Arab conquest entailed a significant change in the relations between the Muslims and the Christians. The provinces of the Byzantine Empire conquered by the Arabs were inhabited by the predominantly Christian population. In Persia the Christians, mostly Nestorians, formed a significant minority. The annexation of these territories obviously made it necessary for the Arabs to define anew their attitude towards the Christians.

The *Qurʾān* finds religious pluralism permissible. The point repeatedly made in it is that the Lord, had it been His wish, would have made all people into a sin-

¹⁷ *Qurʾān*, 17:1 (all *Qurʾānic* translations in this chapter by 'Ali Quli Qara'i).

¹⁸ M. Sadowski, *Teologia arabskich chrześcijan. Nowum czy déjà vu?*, KWT.UMK 26.2, 2014, p. 220.

¹⁹ J. Shafi, *Maria the Coptic*, [in:] i d e m, *Unmasking Muḥammad's Life, Behind the Veil*, vol. II, n.p. 2008, pp. 63–65. The Prophet also had a Jewish wife, Šāfiya. Sh. A l e c m, *Prophet Muḥammad(s) and His Family: A Sociological Perspective*, Bloomington 2007, p. 128.

gle nation. But He opted for the plurality of religions and nations²⁰. The Holy Book of the Muslims calls on all religious communities to rival in performing good deeds, mentioning the Christians, the Jews and the Sabeans by name²¹.

Remarks concerning the non-Muslims appear in the *Qurʾān* in different contexts²². Their analysis allows us to distinguish three phases reflecting changes in the relations between the *umma* and the non-Muslims and corresponding to the Prophet's meetings with the Polytheists in Mecca, with the Jews in Medina and with the Christians in northwest Arabia²³. The Prophet believed that he was God's messenger, with his prophecy being only the last one in a series of prophecies that had previously been brought to the Jews and Christians by Abraham (called in Arabic *Ibrāhīm*), Moses (*Mūsā*) and Jesus (*ʿĪsā*)²⁴. It was on this ground that he expected the followers of these religions to accept his teachings. The rejection of his ideas by the Jews filled him with resentment, but he still hoped that the Christians would prove more responsive to his message²⁵. The greatest number of favourable comments on Jesus and his followers originated in this period of Muḥammad's career:

Surely you will find/ the most hostile of all people towards the faithful/ to be the Jews and the polytheists,/ and surely you will find/ the nearest of them in affection to the faithful/ to be those who say *We are Christians*/ That is because/ there are priests and monks among them,/ and because they are not arrogant.²⁶

In a detailed study of Muslim commentaries on the *Qurʾān*'s verses devoted to Christians, Jane D. McAuliffe refers to a number of texts which betray a positive attitude towards, if not all, then at least some Christian groups²⁷. However, says McAuliffe, the Muslims' approval of Christianity was always qualified – restricting itself exclusively to the *Qurʾānic* Christians, those who accepted Muḥammad's prophecy²⁸.

²⁰ *Qurʾān*, 5:48; 11:118; 16:93; 42:8.

²¹ I.J. Boullata, *Fa-stabiq 'l-khayrat: A Qurʾanic Principle of Interfaith Relations*, [in:] *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, eds. Y.Y. Haddad, W.Z. Haddad, Gainesville 1995, pp. 43–44.

²² H. Goddard, *Historia...*, p. 37.

²³ J. Wardenburg, *The Quran on Other Religions*, [in:] *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions. A Historical Survey*, ed. idem, Oxford–New York 1999, p. 3.

²⁴ H. Goddard, *Historia...*, p. 38.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 39.

²⁶ *Qurʾān*, 5:85.

²⁷ *Qurʾān*, 3:55; 3:199; 5:66; 27:52–55; 57:27.

²⁸ J.D. McAuliffe, *Qurʾanic Christians. An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis*, Cambridge 1991, pp. 287–288.

With time, as the contacts between the followers of both religions became more frequent and the Christians' resistance to Islam more obvious, the tone of the *Qur'ān* grew harsher:

Fight those who do not have faith in Allah/nor [believe] in the Last Day,/ nor forbid/
what Allah and His Apostle have forbidden,/ nor practice the true religion,/ from
among those who were given the Book,/ until they paid the tribute out of hand,/
degraded²⁹.

The People of the Book are the Jews and the Christians, and this fragment must have been brought into being when the relations between the *umma* and these groups grew tense³⁰.

Although Christians are never explicitly referred to in the *Qur'ān* as *mushrikūn*³¹ (those who are accused of *shirk*, that is, polytheism or idolatry) or *kāfirūn* (those who do not believe), some verses at least indirectly suggest that they are guilty of these sins:

They are certainly faithless who say,/ *Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary.*/ But the Messiah had said, *O Children of Israel!! Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord.*/ They are certainly faithless who say,/ *Allah is the third [person] of a trinity,*/ while there is no god except the One God./ If they do not relinquish what they say,/ there shall befall the faithless among them a painful punishment.³²

Although Christians do not consider their God to be only one of the three, it can be assumed that the Muslims understood the doctrine of the Holy Trinity in such a simplified and distorted way, thus accusing the Christians of *shirk*³³. And unbelievers were to be subject to judgment. The *Qur'ānic* verses revealed in the earlier, Meccan period, left the judgment to God, while those revealed later, in the Medinan period, turned it over to the earthly community of Muslims³⁴.

The Torah and the Gospel are amicably mentioned in the Holy Book of Islam which does not fail to do justice both to their anteriority and to their divine origin as well. *Yet before it the Book of Moses/ was a guide and a mercy,/ and this is*

²⁹ *Qur'ān*, 9:29.

³⁰ H. G o d d a r d, *Historia...*, p. 40.

³¹ The term was used to refer to polytheists from the Quraysh tribe from which Muḥammad was descended. For more on the Prophet's conflict with *mushrikūn* in: B.B.H. A b u B a k a r, *Conflict Between the Prophet Muhammad and the Mushrikun of Quraysh During the Meccan Period in Arabic Literature*, London 1977.

³² *Qur'ān*, 5:75-76.

³³ H. G o d d a r d, *Historia...*, p. 42.

³⁴ D. M a r s h a l l, *God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers*, London 1999, pp. 39, 157.

*a Book which confirms it,/ in the Arabic language,/ to warn those who do wrong,/ and is a [bearer of] good news for the virtuous*³⁵. In the pages of the Qur'an, God even instructs the Muslims to, when in doubt, turn their eyes to the People of the Book, the Christians and the Jews³⁶, to whom the Scripture – the Torah, the Psalms and the Gospel – was previously entrusted. *So if you are in doubt/ about what We have sent down to you,/ ask those who read the Book/ [revealed] before you./ The truth has certainly come to you from your Lord;/ so do not be among the skeptics*³⁷. The verse 46 of the Sūra 29 clearly offers a perspective of interreligious understanding:

Do not dispute with the People of the Book/ except in a manner which is best,/ barring such of them as are wrongdoers,/ and say, *We believe/ in that which has been sent down to us/ and has been sent down to you;/ our God and your God is one [and the same], and to Him do we submit.*

Later, the controversy surrounding this verse made it necessary for the followers of all three religions to put forward arguments lending credibility to their respective Scriptures: *And they say, "No one shall enter paradise/ except one who is a Jew or a Christian"./ Those are their [false] hopes!/ Say, "Produce your evidence,/ should you be truthful"*³⁸.

It is worth noting that it was not long before the Muslim scholars began to deploy the argument³⁹ that the Christians changed God's original message, and that some of their dogmas were not grounded in the Bible but in the decisions of church councils. The Muslims' doctrine on the falsification of the Bible (*tahrif*) applied, as Michał Sadowski reminds us, both to the Old and to the New Testament whose respective texts were believed to have been either distorted or falsified altogether⁴⁰. The Muslims considered the fragmentation of the Church to be evidence of the Christians' departure from the truth.

Also from those who say, *We are Christians,/ We took their pledge;/ but they forgot a part of what they were reminded./ So We stirred up enmity and hatred among them/*

³⁵ Qur'an, 46:12.

³⁶ Later, the term was extended to include the Zoroastrians and even Hinduists. G. Vaj-d a, *Ahl al-Kitāb*, [in:] *EI*, vol. I, p. 264.

³⁷ Qur'an, 10:94.

³⁸ Qur'an, 2:111.

³⁹ S.H. Griffith, *Gospel*, [in:] J.D. McAuliffe, *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, vol. II, Leiden 2002, pp. 342–343; R. Caspar, J.M. Gaudel, *Textes sur le "tahrif"*, Islch 8, 1980, p. 62; *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions: a Historical Survey*, ed. J. Wardenburg, New York–Oxford 1999, p. 43.

⁴⁰ M. Sadowski, *Teologia...*, p. 223.

until the Day of Resurrection/ and soon Allah will inform them/ concerning what they had been doing.⁴¹

The Arabs referred to those whom they were willing to regard as adhering to the true Gospel – written in *al-ʿibrāniyya* – as *naṣārā*, initially using this term for denoting Judeo-Christians, probably the Ebionites, who observed the Law of Moses and forswore earthly wealth – of which, by the way, they spoke quite warmly⁴².

To conclude this section, the *Qurʾān* contains both positive and negative opinions about the Jews and the Christians. On one hand members of these religions are considered to deserve protection as the People of the Book and on the other they are accused of rejecting Muḥammad's teachings and of being guilty of *shirk* and *kufṛ*⁴³.

3.2. The Muslims' Attitude towards the Christians in Muḥammad's Lifetime

Muḥammad's arrival in Medina made it necessary to regulate the relations between the newly founded Muslim community and the members of other religions living in the city: the Jews, the Christians and the Pagans. On the Prophet's initiative, the so-called *Constitution of Medina*, a very important document in the history of early Islam, was proclaimed. It defined the rights and duties of different Arab tribes, thus putting an end to their feuds, and asserted the role of Medina as a sacred place where all violence is forbidden. Remarkably liberal, it went very far in its tolerance for other cults and religions, guaranteeing the non-Muslims personal safety, protection of women and freedom of religion. Imposing new taxes to support the community in times of conflict, it established the system of courts for resolving disputes. Since some of these disputes involved bloody vengeance, it helped to fend off the outbreak of destructive vendettas. The document stated absolutely clear that *the Jews preserved their religion and the Muslims theirs*, and that the Jews should pay *naḥaḥa*⁴⁴ – just like other members of the *umma* all of whom were supposed to unite in the struggle against the enemies of the signatories to the *Constitution*. The members of the *umma*

⁴¹ *Qurʾān*, 5:12; H. Goddard, *Historia...*, p. 24.

⁴² H. Bin Talal, *Christianity in the Arab World*, Amman 1994, pp. 11–12.

⁴³ H. Goddard, *Historia...*, p. 43.

⁴⁴ *Naḥaḥa* referred to financial support which under Islamic law a husband was required to offer to his wife or wives, or to alimony which he paid to his wife and children after divorce.

were also urged to support each other with counsel, to remain true to their word, to repudiate the evil and to abstain from behaving in a wicked way towards their allies⁴⁵.

A few years later, in 628, Muḥammad launched an attack on a rich oasis, Khaybar, inhabited mainly by the Jews. The attackers acted on the pretext that the Jews of Khaybar offered shelter to their brethren from the Banū Naḍīr, who had been banished from Medina, and entered into alliance with Mecca. After a six-week siege, the Muslims finally broke Khaybar's resistance. Local Jews saved their lives but lost their land. They also had to surrender half their crops to Muḥammad who, in addition, was free to withdraw from the agreement at any time, ordering their expulsion from the oasis⁴⁶.

Around 630, the Muslims reached an agreement with other religious communities. The adoption of Islam by the Ḥimyarites – a Semitic people from southern Arabia – occasioned the following remark about the Jews and the Christians:

If a Jew or a Christian becomes a Muslim, he becomes a believer with all the rights and duties. He who wants to adhere to his own religion, whether he is a Jew or a Christian, will not be urged to renounce his beliefs. He must pay taxes.⁴⁷

A similar statement was repeated a few months later, in the midst of much more dramatic circumstances. A delegation led by Khalīd Ibn Al-Wālid was sent to Nadjran with a goal to present its inhabitants, mostly Christians, with an ultimatum: either, within three days, they will convert to Islam or their city will be attacked. Most opted for the conversion⁴⁸. Those who refused to accept the Prophet's religion had to pay a tribute. All the inhabitants were obliged to abstain from exercising usury; in return they were assured of the absolute safety of both their priests and their churches⁴⁹. Such an approach to non-Muslims, which can be called a compromise, typified Muḥammad's activity in its late stage and consisted in leaving the Christians and the Jews to their own devices as long as they were prepared to obey the Muslim authorities, which primarily involved paying taxes these authorities imposed⁵⁰.

⁴⁵ Quot. from J. D a n e c k i published in: PR 1, 1993, pp. 43–44. See also: H. G o d - d a r d, *Historia...*, p. 45.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 46.

⁴⁷ I b n I s ḥ ā ḳ , p. 643.

⁴⁸ I b n I s ḥ ā ḳ , pp. 510–518.

⁴⁹ The text by Ibn Sa'd is quoted from: W. M o n t g o m e r y W a t t, *Muḥammad at Medina*, Oxford 1981, pp. 359–360.

⁵⁰ H. G o d d a r d, *Historia...*, p. 47.

3.3. The Muslims' Attitude toward the Christians after Muḥammad's Death

It was the Prophet's interactions with the Jews, much more frequent than his encounters with the Christians, that served as precedents on which, after his death in 632, his followers relied in developing two main attitudes towards the non-Muslims. The first, highly antagonistic, manifested itself in the expulsion by the Prophet's followers of the Jews and the Christians from Arabia. The second, prevalent during the Muslim expansion, seemed to be more conciliatory⁵¹.

The final stage of Muḥammad's activity was marked by significant hostility towards the Jews and the Christians, resulting in the outburst of the persecution of non-Muslims right after the Prophet's death. Patricia Crone and Michael Cook are of the opinion that the Muslims' military raids on the lands bordering Arabia, which took place right after 632, were the most cruel – as illustrated, for example, by the fate of the members of the Byzantine garrison in Gaza whom the Muslim conquerors left with a hard choice: the conversion to Islam or death. Having refused to accept Islam, the soldiers were murdered⁵². The burning of churches, the destroying of monasteries and the desecrating of crosses all came about just in this period – for example, in Sinai. This led to a decrease in the number of Christian pilgrimages which, however, did not disappear altogether, continuing into the tenth century, approved of by the Muslims because of the financial gains that went with them⁵³.

Things were no better in Arabia, from which, within ten years of Muḥammad's death, all Jews and Christians were expelled. The Muslim accounts of these expulsions differ from one another in some details – Al-Wāḳidī reports that Caliph 'Umar expelled the Jews from Al-Ḥidjāz⁵⁴, while according to At-Ṭabarī they were expelled from Khaybar⁵⁵. 'Umar's orders regarding Christians were no different, although there is evidence to suggest that Nadjrān still remained

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 59.

⁵² P. C r o n e, M. C o o k, *Hagarism. The Making of Islamic World*, New York 1977, pp. 6, 120.

⁵³ Ch. W a l s h, *The Cult of St. Katherine of Alexandria in Early Medieval Europe*, Aldershot–Burlington 1988, p. 43. The decrease in the number of pilgrims affected the quantity and quality of devotional articles and the objects of religious art – after the conquest such objects were produced rarely and only in a few places. Thessalonica and Constantinople rose then to the position of important centres attracting pilgrims. G. V i k a n, *Early Byzantine Pilgrimage Art*, Washington 2010, p. 87.

⁵⁴ W ā ḳ i d ī, vol. I, pp. 176–180.

⁵⁵ Ṭ a b a r ī, *Tarikh*, vol. III, pp. 105–111 (ed. M.A.F. I b r a h i m).

their home throughout the two centuries which followed this caliph's reign⁵⁶. The tradition which credited the Prophet with the rejection of the possibility of the co-existence of two religions in Arabia was used by the Muslims as a justification for the removal of all non-believers from their lands⁵⁷.

Muslim sources offer different accounts of the conquest. Generally, the Arabs, following something of an established pattern, presented besieged cities with an ultimatum: either the inhabitants will surrender, thus saving their lives and property; or they will resist, thus making the terms under which to surrender much harsher – the existing churches will be turned into mosques, and the erection of new ones forbidden. Faced with such an alternative, many cities chose to surrender. Some, however, fiercely resisted⁵⁸.

A case in point here is the capture of Jerusalem without a fight. Patriarch Sophronius was designated to negotiate the terms of surrender on behalf of the inhabitants of the city the takeover of which was carried out under Caliph 'Umar's personal supervision. Sitting on a donkey led by his servant, the caliph entered Jerusalem without pomp and signed a peace treaty with Sophronius, from whom he received the keys to the city. Under the agreement, the Christians and their churches were given 'Umar's protection⁵⁹. Then, the caliph gave orders to clear the area of the Temple Mount and build there a wooden mosque. The mosque was built on the site where the so-called Farthest Mosque (*al-Masjid al-Aḳṣā*, known simply as *Al-Aḳṣā*), built by the Umayyads in 715, is now standing. The Christian Arabic tradition holds that the caliph dropped the idea of praying in the Basilica of the Holy Grave in order to save it from being turned into a mosque. Instead, he prayed in front of the church, where the Dome of the Rock, erected at about the same time as *Al-Aḳṣā*, is still to be found. As a consequence, the city centre shifted from the area within which the Basilica of the Holy Grave was situated to

⁵⁶ J.S. Trimmingham, *Christianity among the Arabs in pre-Islamic Times*, London 1979, p. 307.

⁵⁷ This ḥadīth, despite its popularity in the Middle East, is dubious and many western authors mention it without providing its source. Ḥadīth similar in content can be found in *Sahih Muslim's* collection (vol. XIX, No 4366): 'Umar bin al-Chattab said that he heard the Prophet (peace be with him) say "I will expel the Jews and Christians from the Peninsula and there will be no one left except Muslims". In Saudi Arabia to this day neither the Christians nor the Jews are allowed to practice their religion publicly. The latter are even forbidden to enter the country – they cannot legally obtain visas. W. Lingle, R. Delancy, *Burning Questions about Islam: A Panoramic Study for Concerned Christians*, Bloomington 2011, p. 17.

⁵⁸ On the surrender of the cities to Muslim invaders see: M. Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire: From Surrender to Coexistence*, Cambridge 2011, pp. 32–41.

⁵⁹ S. Runciman, *Dzieje wypraw krzyżowych*, vol. 1, Warszawa 1987, pp. 3–4.

the one occupied by a Jewish temple and new Muslim places of worship⁶⁰.

'Umar ordered the Arabs to refer to the Temple Mount as *Madīnat Bayt al-Makdis*. The remaining part of Jerusalem was to be called *Īliyā* – after the name with which the centre was “christened” by the Romans in 70, *Aelia Capitolina*⁶¹. With time, the Arabs began to refer to the Temple Mount as *al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf* and to the city as *Bayt al-Makdis* (the Noble Sanctuary). Finally, the city began to be called *Al-Kuds al-Sharīf* (the Noble City). After 'Umar proclaimed Jerusalem to be the third most important Muslim city (along with Mecca and Medina), the traditional interpretation of the *Qur'ān* was changed in such a way as to accommodate the city's new status. The islamization of the centre commenced in the first year after Hidjra, that is, in 632. During their prayers, the Muslims began to turn to Jerusalem, with which the tale of Muḥammad's night journey to heaven came to be linked⁶². It was only after thirteen years that the direction of the prayer was changed to Mecca. In 638 Jerusalem was incorporated into the Caliphate⁶³. However, despite this incorporation the city managed to preserve its Christian character. Bearing witness to this is Mu'awiya's decision, after his rise to power in 661, to pray at Golgotha, in the Garden of Gethsemane, at Mary's grave⁶⁴.

After it became clear that Byzantium definitely had lost Syro-Palestine, and the whole of the conquered territory came under the Arab administration, the relations between the Christians and the Muslims stabilized. All civil and military power rested with the Arab conquerors, while the non-Muslims, in return for the payment by all free and adult males of a special tax called *djizya*, preserved the right to exercise their religion⁶⁵. The term *djizya* was taken from the fragment of the *Qur'ān* quoted above indicating that it was necessary for the People of the Book to pay a levy (*djizya*)⁶⁶.

The life of the Christians in the Muslim state was regulated in detail in the so-

⁶⁰ P. C r o n e, M. C o o k, *Hagarism....*, pp. 154–155; *Jerusalem. Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, ed. L. I. L e v i n d e, New York 1999, p. XXIII.

⁶¹ J. M. L i n q u i s t, *The Temple of Jerusalem*, London 2008, p. 184.

⁶² In describing Muḥammad's night travell, the *Qur'ān* (17:1) says: *Immaculate is He who/ carried His servant on a journey by night/ from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthes Mosque*. Around 612 there existed the so-called *Holy Place* in Mecca, while *the Farthest Mosque* was a metaphor which some understood as indicating a dwelling-place in heaven.

⁶³ M. G i l, *A History of Palestine, 634–1099*, Cambridge 1997, pp. 70–71.

⁶⁴ A. S. T r i t t o n, *Caliphs and Their Non-Muslim Subjects: A Critical Study of the Covenant of 'Umar*, Abingdon–New York 2008, pp. 102–103.

⁶⁵ Muslim law schools differed in the method of calculating *djizya*. M. K h a d d u r i, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, Clark 2006, p. 196.

⁶⁶ H. G o d d a r d, *Historia....*, p. 63.

called 'Umar's *Pact*. Although it is regarded as the agreement which this ruler concluded with the population of the conquered territories, it probably came into being much later⁶⁷. Following the Qur'ān's call for paying taxes and enduring humiliation, the *Pact* explains in more detail what meeting this demand actually involves. Under the *Pact*, the population inhabiting the conquered territories, in addition to being banned from criticizing Muḥammad and the Qur'ān, could not engage in military operations and offer assistance to enemy spies, could not erect new churches and reconstruct those that have been destroyed, could not eat pork and drink wine in public places, and could not marry Muslim women and wear obtrusive clothes. At the same time, the agreement required the Christians to remain always loyal to Muslim rulers and to practice their religion only in private without displaying the symbols of the cross publicly⁶⁸.

From the extended version of the *Pact* one learns that the Christians had to swear to abstain, among other things, from carrying the Bible and crosses in religious processions – especially during Easter and on Palm Sunday – persuading the Muslims to convert to Christianity, riding on horseback using saddles and building houses taller than those built by the Muslims⁶⁹. The document quoted here, which was probably brought into being in the second century after Hidjra, shows that the Arabs, besides treating the Christians as second-class citizens, also viewed them as *dhimmī* (protected), the people of the Covenant⁷⁰.

The term *dhimma* appears in the Qur'ān twice, on the occasion of Muḥammad's crackdown on the wicked, that is, those who violate the covenant. In the era of the Arab conquests, the term began to be used for denoting the agreements reached between the conquered population and Muslim rulers. There existed precedents for such a policy: the Sassanids attempted to secure the loyalty of the subjects by resorting to a variety of legal regulations and by promising protection and limited religious freedom to those who agreed to pay taxes⁷¹.

It should be kept in mind that not all Christians living in the East fell under Muslim domination. The Empire, even after losing Egypt and Syria, still controlled most of its former territory. In spite of the fact that the Byzantine-Arab frontier in the Taurus Mountains was stable, the rivalry between the Byzantines

⁶⁷ One of the proofs lies in the fact that during the reign of 'Umar *ḍjizya* (head tax) was not yet distinguished from *kharāj* (land tax), although both are mentioned in the *Pact*.

⁶⁸ A.S. Tritton, *The Caliphs...*, pp. 5–6.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 6–8.

⁷⁰ H. Goddard, *Historia...*, p. 65.

⁷¹ M.G. Morony, *Religious Communities in Late Sassanian and Early Muslim Iraq*, JESHO 17, 1974, pp. 113–135.

and the Arabs, both on land and at sea, continued. There also existed something of a cultural and intellectual exchange between the two⁷². Byzantine artisans were sent by Emperor Justinian II (685–695, 705–711) to caliph Al-Walid (705–715) in order to carry out the interior decoration of the Great Mosque in Damascus and of the Prophet's Grave in Medina⁷³.

After resigning themselves to their fate, Middle Eastern Christians were allowed to practice their religion. Christian clergymen called for submission to earthly authority, promising in return eternal life in heaven. They attempted to rationalize the status of the inhabitants of the conquered territories and to console the faithful by arguing that Jesus was superior to Muḥammad and Christianity theologically superior to Islam. The humiliations the Christians suffered were not as great as to lead to mass conversions, and some Christians did as well in economically as their Muslim neighbours⁷⁴.

3.4. The Christian Response to the Advent of Islam

The first Christian interpretations of Islam were centred around social and political rather than religious issues. In the seventh century, in Syria, people were more aware of the rise of a new empire than of a new religion⁷⁵.

After some time, the Christians began to feel the need to find a theological explanation of the advent of the Muslims⁷⁶. In the New Testament Jesus is shown meeting with a Canaanite woman (Mt 15,21–28) and a Roman centurion (Mt, 5–13), listening to their pleas, which testifies to his openness towards the people of different ethnic origin⁷⁷. According to Magdalena Lewicka, Saint Paul, in his Areopagus' address, laid the foundation for an interreligious dialogue⁷⁸. However, it is the Old Testament – the Book of Genesis, to be precise – that explains the origin of the Muslims in a story about Abraham's sons – the first-born

⁷² C.F. Bosworth, *Byzantium and the Arabs. War and Peace between Two World Civilisations*, [in:] idem, *The Arabs, Byzantium and Iran*, London 1996, art. XIII, pp. 1–24.

⁷³ H. Goddard, *Historia...*, p. 67.

⁷⁴ J. Joseph, *Muslim-Christian Relations...*, p. 14.

⁷⁵ S. Brock, *Syriac Views on Emergent Islam*, [in:] *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society*, ed. G.H.A. Juynboll, Edwardsville 1982, p. 13.

⁷⁶ Christian sources from before the lifetime of John of Damascus are characterized in: A.-L. de Prémare, *Les Fondations de l'Islam. Entre écriture et histoire*, Paris 2002, pp. 395–469.

⁷⁷ A. Wessels, *Some Biblical Considerations Relevant to the Encounter Between Traditions*, [in:] *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, eds. Y.Y. Haddad, W.Z. Haddad, Gainesville 1995, pp. 57–58.

⁷⁸ M. Lewicka, *Od konfrontacji...*, pp. 139–140.

Ishmael, who was banished to the desert along with his mother, a slave woman named Hagar⁷⁹, and the younger son Isaac whom Abraham had by a legitimate wife, Sarah. The former was supposed to become father of all the Arabs, while the latter was destined to be father of all the Jews. The Book of Genesis contains God's following promise: *And God said unto Abraham (...) And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed*⁸⁰. In chapter 25 of the Book, Ishmael's twelve sons are mentioned before the twelve sons of Isaac – in part for the sake of balance and in part to underline the fact that they also form something of a sacred community⁸¹.

In the mid-seventh century, an Armenian bishop, Sebeos, claimed that Muḥammad owed his success to having a good knowledge of the Law of Moses and to teaching the Arabs about Abraham's God. According to Sebeos, the Arabs and the Jews were agreed that both people descended from the same Patriarch⁸². An anonymous Nestorian monk, whose work was written in Iraq around 670, claimed that Ismailis' conquests were driven by a desire to follow in Abraham's steps. The offerings they made to God were a part of the old tradition⁸³.

The Muslims made no secret of their belief that they were fulfilling God's will and that one of their goals was to correct the teachings of Jesus. It quickly became clear that Islam posed a challenge for the older religion. The Christians, who considered themselves to be in possession of ultimate divine revelation, understood that the Muslims would not accept their position. This led them to elaborate a specific interpretation of Islam – or rather interpretations, for there quickly appeared differences of opinion concerning the new religion between the Christians from the East and those from the West⁸⁴.

In the Middle East, Christians interpreted the advent of Islam in terms of the judgment which God passed on those who strayed from the path of righteousness. The Nestorians and the Monophysites in turn pinned the blame on the advocates of the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon. Severus Ibn Al-Muḳaffa', the bishop of Ashmunein, and a Coptic editor of the *Lives of the Saint Church*, wrote that *the Lord abandoned the Roman army as punishment for clinging to the corrupted faith and for inflicting the anathemas on the old Fathers in connection*

⁷⁹ After her name Syrian writers called all Muslims *mbagrajje*. S.H. Griffith, *Syriac Writers on Muslims and the Religious Challenge of Islam*, Piscataway 2012, pp. 9–11.

⁸⁰ Gen. 21, 12–13.

⁸¹ G. von Rad, *Genesis. A Commentary*, London 1961, p. 258.

⁸² Sebeos, p. 238.

⁸³ J. Moorhead, *The Earliest Christian Theological Response to Islam*, Rel 11, 1981, pp. 265–267.

⁸⁴ H. Goddard, *Historia...*, p. 52.

with their role in the Council of Chalcedon⁸⁵. A few centuries later, this interpretation was still adhered to. It was a reaction to the mistreatment of “pre-Chalcedon” Christians by Byzantine authorities in Egypt and Syria⁸⁶.

In Egypt, the Copts suffered harassment from the orthodox Patriarch Cyrus, known by the Arabs as Al-Muḳawḳis (which means “the one who comes from the Caucasus”), who served as governor under Emperor Heraclius. He launched a wave of terror which the Egyptians had not experienced since the Great Persecution taking place during the reign of Diocletian. Cyrus’ policy may have undermined the loyalty of some of the Copts to the Empire. Some Middle Eastern Christians remained true to the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon. They came to be referred to as the Melkites (after the Syrian word *malka* denoting a king) because of their adherence to the Byzantine liturgy and due to their allegiance to Byzantine emperors⁸⁷. The Melkites gave birth to a different interpretation of Islam, John of Damascus being one of its proponents. Although he was probably unacquainted with the Qur’ān⁸⁸, he had a good command of Arabic and a good knowledge of Muslim religious rituals – his father served as an official at a caliph’s court and John, in his youth, was, according to legend, friendly with Yazīd of the Umayyad dynasty. In his opinion, the simplest way of conveying the essence of Islam lay in treating it as one of the Christian heresies⁸⁹.

In *De Haeresibus* (*On Heresies*), John lists one hundred heresies known to previous theologians, adding Islam as heresy one hundred and one⁹⁰. Although, John admits, Muḥammad brought monotheism to the pagan people, he did so by turning the pages of the Old and New Testament in a random manner, and, in creating a new system, he relied on the assistance of an Arian monk. Therefore, Islam should be rejected as the *deceptive superstition of the Ishmaelites* and the *forerunner of the Antichrist*. John applied the last term to the religion and not to the Prophet, as would often be the case with different authors later⁹¹. Like other Byzantine polemicists, he was familiar with the Arabic tradition that originated in the pre-Islamic era – for example, with the cult of the Morning Star⁹². He also had a knowledge of Qur’ānic Christology and theology, demonstrating it especially in the discussion of the religious sources of Islam: Judaism (mono-

⁸⁵ W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, Cambridge 1972, p. 353.

⁸⁶ H. Goddard, *Historia...*, p. 53.

⁸⁷ Today, the name is used to refer to Christians from the Middle East who adheres to the Byzantine rite.

⁸⁸ J.R. Merrill, *On the Tractate of John of Damascus on Islam*, MWO 41, 1951, p. 97.

⁸⁹ John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, col. 764.

⁹⁰ M. Sadowski, *Teologia...*, p. 213.

⁹¹ H. Goddard, *Historia...*, pp. 56–57.

⁹² J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Views on Islam*, DOP 18, 1964, p. 118.

theism), Arianism (the Word and the Spirit considered as created beings), and Nestorianism (the doctrine that saw Jesus Christ as a human being)⁹³. Given the above, one cannot fully agree with Rollin Armour who wrote:

In responding to Islam, John of Damascus and other Greek authors put forward a number of erroneous interpretations and false accusations which, while helping to forge Christian identity, were of no help in dealing with Islam's religious and theological principles, as well as with the integrity of faith and life typifying this religion⁹⁴.

There is uncertainty as to who wrote *Disputatio Saraceni et Chritiani* (*A Conversation between a Christian and a Muslim*). It is attributed either to John of Damascus or to his student Theodore Abū Qurra⁹⁵ – though it seems more likely that it was the latter who wrote the work⁹⁶ which was something of a guide for Christians willing to discuss religious issues with the Muslims⁹⁷. It is also evidence of John of Damascus' participation in more or less formal discussions with Muslim theologians⁹⁸. The issues dealt with in the treatise were the focus of *kalām*⁹⁹ – a Muslim theology that began to develop in the mid-eighth century – and con-

⁹³ M. Sadowski, *Teologia...*, p. 213.

⁹⁴ R. Armour, *Islam, chrześcijaństwo i Zachód. Burzliwe dzieje wzajemnych relacji*, transl. I. Nowicka, Kraków 2004, pp. 89–90.

⁹⁵ Born around 740/750 in Edessa Theodore Abū Qurra played an important role in a controversy between the Christians and the Muslims over the unity of God. The Muslims accused the Christians of believing in three gods. Abū Qurra argued that the Bible's testimony suffices for one to recognize divinity of all the persons in the Holy Trinity – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In addition, out of consideration for those who did not share Christian dogmas, he also resorted to Aristotle's arguments on the unity of being. S.L. Hussaini, *Early Christian-Muslim Debate on the Unity of God: Three Christian Scholars and Their Engagement with the Islamic Thought (9th Century CE)*, Leiden 2014, p. 61. For more on Theodore Abū Qurra see: Ł. Karczewski, *Dialog Teodora Abu Kurra ze światem islamu – zarys problematyki*, *Sem* 33, 2013, pp. 277–292.

⁹⁶ J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Views...*, p. 117.

⁹⁷ H. Goddard, *Historia...*, p. 57.

⁹⁸ D.J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam: "The Heresy of the Ishmaelites"*, Leiden 1972, pp. 121–122; *John of Damascus. A Dialogue between a Saracen and a Christian*, [in:] M.S. Sale, *Qur'an and Bible*, London 1978, pp. 63–70.

⁹⁹ From the Muslim point of view *kalām* was formal and speculative reasoning applied in religion. It constituted a logically regulated way of carrying out disputations in such a way as to justify religious doctrines based on generally accepted principles. S.H. Griffith, *Faith and Reason in Christian Kalām: Theodore Abū Qurrah on Discerning the True Religion*, [in:] Kh. Samir, J.S. Nielsen, *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750–1258)*, Leiden 1994, p. 3; M. Sadowski, *Chrześcijańska arabskojęzyczna literatura apologetyczna Bliskiego i Środkowego Wschodu w okresie Abbasydów (750–1050)*, *STHSO* 32, 2012, p. 91.

cerned the relation between God's omnipotence and man's free will, as well as the identity of *God's Word*¹⁰⁰.

To conclude this section, in the initial period of Muslim-Christian contacts, there emerged three main ways of interpreting Islam. The new religion was seen as the fulfillment of God's promise given to Abraham and Ishmael, as God's judgment against the Chalcedonians, and as one of the Christian heresies. In the ninth century, there began to appear new, more negative interpretations of Muḥammad's religion. However, their discussion lies outside the scope of this paper.

3.5. The Arabization of the Language of the Christians in the Middle East

The Arabic language constituted one of the elements of the new cultural context in which the Christians of the region were placed. At the end of the seventh century, following 'Abd al-Malik's order, Arabic began to take the place of Greek and Persian as the official language of the state¹⁰¹. Determined to defend their own religion, the Christians in the Middle East had to address themselves to the task of translating works which were of crucial importance for their religious beliefs. The adoption of Arabic by Christian churches that remained under Arab domination had no impact either on their doctrine or their liturgy¹⁰². It also did not entail any changes in the content of their sacred books. The transition to the new language was necessary as the faithful used it in their everyday life¹⁰³.

The Arabic language served as the medium without which the intellectual encounter between the Christians and the Muslims would have been impossible. However, a serious problem lay in the fact that theological terminology was absent from Arabic which until the eighth century was not the language of theology or philosophy. Thus, it became necessary to elaborate a vocabulary to be used in the Muslim-Christian dialogue. The process of creating this vocabulary involved providing commonly used words with uncommon meanings¹⁰⁴.

¹⁰⁰ H. Goddard, *Historia...*, p. 58.

¹⁰¹ M. Sadowski, *Teologia...*, p. 215.

¹⁰² See, for example, the Arab profession of faith by Abū Qurra. I. Dick, *Deux écrits inédits de Théodore Abuqurra*, Mu 72, 1959, pp. 53–67.

¹⁰³ M. Sadowski, *Teologia...*, p. 219.

¹⁰⁴ S.H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, London 2008, p. 94.

Of course, it was only gradually that Arabic managed to replace Syrian¹⁰⁵ or Greek. Syrian, used in the monasteries in the fifth and sixth centuries, divided itself into two groups: western (used today in the liturgy by the Melkite Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church and the Maronite Church) and eastern (preserved today by the Assyrian Church of the East). Although Syrian as the language of the communities mentioned above played an important role in almost the whole of the Christian East, its role in Palestine was not very significant¹⁰⁶. At the beginning of the eighth century, Greek still dominated Palestine's church culture¹⁰⁷, serving as the language of theology and liturgical celebrations. It was also used in administration and during Church councils¹⁰⁸. Only in the liturgy of Oriental Churches did it have to give way to Syrian¹⁰⁹.

As Michał Sadowski remarks, it was not until the turn of the eighth and ninth centuries that Greek fell out of use in Palestine, which was an important factor in the Arabization of the region¹¹⁰. The fundamental Christian texts began to be translated into Arabic as early as the eighth century, including the Bible, patristic writings, homilies, hagiographies, confessions and legal canons regulating the life of the Church. Christian apologetic works in Arabic also date back to the eighth century. It is worth noting that the transition to Arabic took longer in the regions where Syrian remained dominant, and Christian apologetic texts were the first to be translated there into Arabic¹¹¹.

3.6. The Syrian Churches

On the eve of the Arab conquest of the Middle East, both the Jacobite and Nestorian churches were subjected to legal discrimination – the Byzantine emperors

¹⁰⁵ I refer here to eastern Aramaic dialect used in the region of Edessa (today in Turkey) which survives in the liturgy of some eastern Churches. For more on the issue, see: A. Tronina, *Wprowadzenie do języka syryjskiego*, Kielce 2003.

¹⁰⁶ S.H. Griffith, *Melkites, Jacobites, and the Christological Controversies in Arabic in Third/Ninth-Century Syria*, [in:] *Syrian Christians under Islam. The First Thousand Years*, ed. D. Thomas, Leiden–Boston–Köln 2001, pp. 9, 16.

¹⁰⁷ Idem, *From Aramaic to Arabic: the Languages of the Monasteries of Palestine in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods*, DOP 51, 1997, p. 11; idem, *Greek into Arabic: Life and Letters in the Monasteries of Palestine in the 9th Century; the Example of the "Summa Theologiae Arabica"*, B 56, 1986, p. 120.

¹⁰⁸ M. Sadowski, *Teologia...*, p. 217.

¹⁰⁹ J. Corbon, *L'Église des Arabes*, Paris 1977, pp. 40–41.

¹¹⁰ M. Sadowski, *Teologia...*, p. 218.

¹¹¹ S.H. Griffith, *The Monks of the Palestine and the Growth of Christian Literature in Arabic*, MWO 78, 1988, pp. 5–6.

recognized only the Melkite Greek Patriarch of Antioch who accepted the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon¹¹².

The Nestorians found refuge in Persia, where they were safe from the emperor's wrath. The situation of the Jacobites was subject to change depending on the political line pursued by the ruler. In the reign of Justinian I, attempts were made to find the common ground between the Jacobites and the Orthodoxes, but to no effect. After the reign of this emperor, the persecution of the Jacobites increased.

The arrival of the Muslims, despite their poor knowledge of the differences existing between Christian churches, changed the situation. Although the Christians were granted the status of the *dhimmi* and were made to pay *djizya*, which led some of them to decide to convert to Islam¹¹³, those who found shelter in the mountains preserved a significant autonomy¹¹⁴. In addition, some Syrian Christians, capitalizing on the cultural advantage they had over the Arabs, managed to secure for themselves the appointment to important positions, which at first they were allowed to hold without having to renounce their religion¹¹⁵. It was sufficient for them to adopt some elements of the Arab culture such as, for example, the language. The Islamization was a slow process, stretching over almost three centuries.

The patriarch Yso'yahb III (died in 659) wrote that God, in giving the Arabs their victory, entrusted them with the role of the custodians of the Christian faith. He dismissed the charges that the Arabs tried to convert the Christians to Islam. In his opinion, it was the weakness of the Syrian clergy which was to blame for such conversions¹¹⁶. The patriarch Timothy in turn appreciated the fact that

¹¹² The orthodox Melkites, although they also lived in Syria's rural areas, were most influential in the cities which remained under Byzantine rule. For more on the Melkites, see: K. Kościelniak, *Grecy i Arabowie. Historia Kościoła melkickiego (katolickiego) na ziemiach zdobytych przez muzułmanów (634–1516)*, Kraków 2004.

¹¹³ Worthy of mention here is the opinion expressed by Daniel C. Dennett, who discovered that the taxes the Muslims imposed on the *dhimmi* were not much higher than those imposed by previous rulers (the Byzantines and the Sassanids). The taxes levied by the Muslims may have encouraged religious conversions because they were imposed on groups (the clergy and aristocracy) that had earlier been exempted from paying taxes. S.H. Griffith, *Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam*, Cambridge 1950.

¹¹⁴ N. Awde, N. Lamassu, N. Al-Jeloo, *Modern Aramaic (Assyrian/Syriac) Dictionary & Phrasebook*, New York 2007, p. 8.

¹¹⁵ A.S. Atiya, *Historia Kościołów wschodnich*, Warszawa 1978, p. 168.

¹¹⁶ S. Brock, *Syriac Views...*, p. 15. For more on the views held by this patriarch see: F.van der Velden, *Early Eastern-Syriac Perception of Islam in Isho'yahb III Letter Epistularum (640–660): No Earlier Christian Sources for a Christian-Muslim Relationship?*, [in:] *Byzan-*

the Muslims abandoned idolatry and polytheism in favour of the worship of One God. This, he believed, enabled them to earn the respect of both the Lord and many people¹¹⁷. Timothy's opinion seems to suggest that initially the Christians in Syria did not view their new rulers as the followers of a religion different from their own. Some Syrian historians considered Caliph 'Umar to be *more merciful than all the rulers before him*¹¹⁸. The anonymous author of the *Chronicle up to 819* seems to share this point of view¹¹⁹. However, the *Chronicle up to 1234* contains the sentence which significantly change the view of the ruler: *'Umar was a good and merciful man, a friend of truth and justice who turned away from the evil. But he was a greater opponent of the Christians than any of the kings before him*¹²⁰. This source also offers examples of anti-Christian laws introduced by this ruler. However, it should be kept in mind that it was brought into being many years after the events which it describes¹²¹.

In the first years which followed the Arab conquest, the Christians were allowed to enter the mosques, their testimonies were heard in courts of law, and their court service was highly praised¹²². In addition, there was a striking difference in the conditions of life enjoyed by Christians living in the cities on one hand and Christians living in rural areas on the other. While the latter bowed under the weight of the land tax exacted by cruel bailiffs, the former, feeling secure and often held in high regard, could make fortunes through trade or money loans. Christian monasteries, where Muslim rulers liked to stay during their trips and where they often held meetings with tribe leaders, enjoyed a special position. Monks could cultivate the land undisturbed and produce wine, deriving huge profits from its production¹²³.

The Syrian Christianity reached the pinnacle of its development in the era of the Umayyad dynasty. The first generations of Muslim officials, lawyers or

tium in Early Islamic Syria: Proceedings of a Conference Organized by the American University of Beirut and the University of Balamand, June 18–19, 2007, eds. N.M. El-Chéikh, S. O'Sullivan, Beirut 2011, pp. 43–48.

¹¹⁷ S. Brock, *Syriac Views...*, p. 16.

¹¹⁸ *Chronicle of 846*, p. 234.

¹¹⁹ *Chronicle up to 819*, p. 15.

¹²⁰ *Chronicle up to 1234*, p. 307.

¹²¹ R. Schick, *The Christian Communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic Rule. A Historical and Archeological Study*, Princeton 1995, pp. 88–89.

¹²² For example, a Christian known as Al-Akhṭal ("a chatterbox") was appointed to the position of court poet (640–710), and John of Damascus' father served as advisor to Caliph 'Abd al-Malik. S.Kh. Bukhsh, *Studies: Indian and Islamic*, London 2001, p. 129.

¹²³ *Ibidem*, p. 128.

theologians were poorly educated and, as such, had to rely on the support of Christians and people acquainted with Hellenistic thought. In the new environment, members of Syrian churches seemed to be better off than under Byzantine rule¹²⁴. With the end of Umayyad rule in 750, the process of the institutionalization of the Muslim theocracy forged rapidly ahead and the Syrian Christianity passed from the phase of its development to that of its decline¹²⁵.

3.6.1. The Jacobite Church

Generally speaking, under Muslim rule the Jacobites' religious freedom was greater than (it had been the case) in Byzantium. Seeking inspiration from more culturally advanced people and, displaying willingness to learn from others, the Arabs showed a certain degree of tolerance towards the non-Muslims. Therefore, the Jacobites were welcome at the caliph's court¹²⁶. The removal of the borders which existed in Asia in the era of Persian and Byzantine domination enabled the Jacobites to expand their missionary activity – especially in Persia and Mesopotamia, where they had already managed to establish their presence. Khusraw II Parviz's first wife, Shirin, was a Jacobite¹²⁷. A Jacobite monk, Marutha (629–649), active towards the end of the Sassanid times, was elevated to the position of the bishop of Tikrit¹²⁸.

One can thus argue that, despite sporadically occurring persecutions, the first centuries which followed the Arab conquest brought stabilization to the life of the Jacobites. Arab rule also witnessed the development of literature and scholarship, including hagiography, historiography, astronomy, natural sciences and medicine. Syrian and Arabic were used for writing. With time, however, the use of the former limited itself only to the liturgy¹²⁹.

The Jacobite patriarch John I (631–648) was reputedly the first to translate fragments of the Bible from Syrian into Arabic¹³⁰. The bishop of Tirkīt, Marutha,

¹²⁴ R.M. Haddad, *Syrian Christians...*, p. 11.

¹²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

¹²⁶ A.S. Atiya, *Historia...*, p. 168.

¹²⁷ For more on the issue see: W. Baum, *Shirin: Christian, Queen, Myth of Love: a Woman of Late Antiquity. Historical Reality and Literary Effect*, Piscataway 2004.

¹²⁸ B.J. Kidd, *Churches of Eastern Christendom from AD 451 to the Present Time*, New York–London 2010 p. 437.

¹²⁹ A.S. Atiya, *Historia...*, p. 169.

¹³⁰ There is an ongoing discussion whether there existed the translations of the Bible into Arabic before Islam. However, even if this was the case, none of them survives now, see: L. Demiri, *Muslim Exegesis of the Bible in Medieval Cairo Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī's (d. 716/1316). Commentary on the Christian Scriptures. A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation with an Introduction*, Leiden 2013, pp. 62–63.

whom I have mentioned above, was a distinguished theologian, bearing the title of Maphrian of the East. Today, this function is purely honorary, but at the time under discussion maphrians performed a very important role in the areas which remained beyond the reach of patriarchs. They were active in the territories dominated by Nestorianism. Born in Persia and educated in Edessa, Marutha settled in the Monastery of Mar Mattai, eagerly defending the doctrine of his Church in Persia and Mesopotamia.

As Aziz Atiya rightly notes, Severus Sebocht (died in 667) deserves credit for being a pioneer of the Syro-Hellenistic science. He is known to have studied philosophy, mathematics, astronomy and theology. The monastery in ʿKinnasrīn where he resided became an important centre of the Jacobite intellectual life. Jacob of Edessa (633–708) – a bishop, theologian, exegete, grammarian, philosopher and historian – also spent his early days in the monastery. A prolific author, he prepared a revised translation of the Old Testament and wrote biblical commentaries. He contributed to the standardization of the Syrian liturgy by composing a new anaphora, baptism rituals, wedding ceremony, and a liturgical calendar. He also wrote a grammar of the Syriac language and a monumental chronicle – a continuation of the work by Eusebius of Caesarea. Except for a few pages, the whole chronicle is lost¹³¹. But there survives an uncompleted work by Jacob of Edessa entitled *Hexaemeron* (syr. *Al-Aksamiran, Six Days*). Having the creation of the world as its main topic, it also describes a utopian state where people live united under one religion. References to the issues that might antagonize the Muslims or the Jews are omitted from the work. What does shine through in it is a proclivity for the Arab mystic philosophy. In addition to being a writer, Jacob was also a church reformer known for his attempt to bring a stricter discipline to the monastic life. However, his efforts encountered opposition from a group of monks whose cause was embraced by patriarch Julian II. As a gesture of protest, Jacob burned the transcripts of old canons in the gate to the patriarch's residence, thus making his superior aware that he was bitterly opposed to the canons¹³². Later, he roamed from monastery to monastery, writing and delivering his sermons until his death in 708. *Hexaemeron* was completed by Jacob's student George, the bishop of the Arabs (686–724). In 'Aḳūla (the province of Al-Kūfa), where the seat of his bishopric was located, he wrote numerous theological and philosophical treatises defending the doctrine of his Church against Nestorianism¹³³.

¹³¹ A.S. Atiya, *Historia...*, p. 170.

¹³² H.G.B. Teule, *Jacob of Edessa and Canon Law*, [in:] *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of His Day*, ed. R.B. Ter Haar Romeny, Leiden 2008, p. 83.

¹³³ For more on the problem, see: I.A. Barsoum, *The Scattered Pearls: a History of Syriac Literature and Sciences*, Piscataway 2003, pp. 354–358.

The West Syrian Church was also, at least in some measure, successful in its evangelization efforts. Atiya mentions the conversion of Elias, a dyophysite, who became a Jacobite patriarch (709–724), having abandoned his earlier views after studying works by Severus of Antioch. Elias tried to justify his decision in an apologia which he wrote as a response to the letter of the Melkite bishop, Leon¹³⁴. Another patriarch, Cyriacus of Tikrit, became famous for preaching gospel among the Armenians. His successor, Dionysius of Tel Mahre, author of the chronicle covering the years 582–842 (that is, from the accession of emperor Maurice to Theophile's death) made a number of visits to the courts of different rulers seeking their support in his dispute with rebel monks. He appeared in Egypt, Baghdad and Damascus¹³⁵. In Baghdad, he met a Christian king of Nubia, who also arrived in the city to pay respects to caliph Al-Mu'taṣim. This was a difficult period for the Jacobite Church riven by internal divisions and facing persecutions from the Muslims¹³⁶.

Against all odds, the Jacobites managed to preserve a significant autonomy. All caliphs were concerned with was whether *djizya* and *kharāj* were paid regularly or who occupied patriarch's throne. Thanks to Christian libraries, Christian schools and scholars, the Arabs were able to absorb the achievements of Hellenistic culture. Still in the reign of the first Abbasid caliphs, most Christians enjoyed much freedom, engaging in trade and using some of the profits it brought to build new churches and monasteries. The situation of the Jacobites was to change for the worse in the centuries to come¹³⁷.

3.6.2. The Nestorian Church (the Church of the East)

The position of the Nestorian Church under Sassanid rule was difficult. This is why some of its leaders hoped that the Arab invasion would result in the improvement of the lives of the members of their community. In 637 the Muslims seized control of the Persian Capital in Seleucia-Ctesiphon, soon taking over the whole state. Six years later, they reached the borders of India. The last Sassanid ruler, Yazdegerd III, who tried to save his life by fleeing his country, was killed in 652 in the Marv oasis by one of his subjects. The Arabs became Persia's only rulers. During the reign of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs and the Umayyads, who moved the capital of the Empire from Mecca to Damascus, Persia was

¹³⁴ A.S. Atiya, *Historia...*, p. 171.

¹³⁵ He was sent to southern Egypt by the caliph in order to stifle the Copts' uprising, see: *The Oxford History of Historical Writing, 400–1400*, vol. II, eds. S. Foot, Ch.F. Robinson, Oxford 2012, p. 173.

¹³⁶ A.S. Atiya, *Historia...*, p. 172.

¹³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 173.

one of the provinces of the great Arab state. It was only in the Abbasid era that the centre of the state shifted further to the east, to Baghdad, and Persia regained some of the influence it had once had. This shift affected the situation of the Nestorians. The Nestorian Church preserved some of the privileges it had enjoyed under Sassanid rulers¹³⁸. It should be recalled here that the Nestorians' status was officially determined during the Council held in Seleucia in 410 and then affirmed by Yazdegerd I (399–420). Muslim rulers did not override these decisions, recognizing the special status the Nestorians had earlier been granted. However, this does not mean that under Muslim rule the Nestorians were given political rights or were exempted from paying taxes the Persians had levied – on the pretext of the war with Byzantium Shapur II doubled the taxes and Khusraw I imposed the head tax in return for the exemption from military service. On the other hand, it seems that the Muslims were more favourably inclined towards the Nestorians than towards any other Christian community¹³⁹.

According to some Nestorian legends, Yso'yahb II (628–643/644) established a friendly relationship with Muḥammad. The Prophet reputedly presented the patriarch with a document conferring on eastern Syrians certain privileges, to be confirmed later by two caliphs – 'Umar and 'Āli¹⁴⁰. The latter was also given credit for granting the Nestorians further rights in return for keeping his army in Mosul supplied with food and water. Scholars, who find these accounts false, believe that Christians created them with a view to improving the position of their Church. Twenty years after the Muslim invasion, the bishop of Adiabene wrote that the Prophet's followers were not as unjust as expected and did not differ from the Christians in respecting the clergy and the churches¹⁴¹.

It is worth noting that the seizure of power by the Abbasid dynasty brought about no changes in the Nestorians' position. Under Abbasid rule, the Nestorian patriarch was the most important Christian dignitary in the whole Caliphate¹⁴², and Nisibis, Jundishapur and Marv flourished as centres of Syrian culture. Theology, philosophy, history, medicine and natural sciences were taught in schools located in these cities. Ancient Greek texts were translated into Syrian and then into Arabic¹⁴³. Working at the court of two successive caliphs as scribes,

¹³⁸ S. Brock, *Christians in the Sasanian Empire: A Case of Divided Loyalties*, [in:] *Religion and National Identity*, ed. S. Mews, Oxford 1982, p. 12.

¹³⁹ A.S. Atiya, *Historia...*, p. 230.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 231.

¹⁴¹ A.R. Vine, *The Nestorian Churches. A Concise History of Nestorian Christianity in Asia from the Persian Schism to the Modern Assyrians*, London 1937, pp. 89–90.

¹⁴² J. Joseph, *Muslim-Christian Relations...*, p. 26.

¹⁴³ N. Awde, N. Lamassu, N. Al-Jeloo, *Modern Aramaic...*, p. 8; W.S. McCullough, *A Short History of Syriac Christianity to the Rise of Islam*, Chico 1982, p. 182.

translators or medics, Nestorians were generally respected¹⁴⁴. Thorough and effective, they also knew how to make themselves indispensable to their new rulers¹⁴⁵.

Although Christianity and Judaism were displaced from Arabia in the seventh century, the church activity did not entirely come to an end there (for example, the Nestorian synod was held in 676 in the south of the peninsula). Nomadic tribes, for example Banu Šālih, remained Christian as late as 823 where they suffered persecution by caliph Al-Ma'mūn. It was not until the end of the ninth century that Nestorianism disappeared altogether from Arabia. We do not know anything about the communities converted to Christianity in Central Asia in the fifth–eighth centuries. Some Christian groups must have still been living in the area at the time under consideration, since in 781, a Turkish ruler wrote a letter to patriarch Timothy (778–820) whom he asked to send a bishop to take over the leadership of the Christians living in his state. Timothy also sent a bishop to Tibet¹⁴⁶. Later, the Nestorians left Samarkand, Bukhara or Tashkent and travelled further to the east where they tried to preach the Christian gospel to the Tartar tribes¹⁴⁷.

It has recently been discovered that Nestorians reached as far east as China. Their first mission was sent there in 635, when the office of the Patriarch of the Church of the East was held by Yso'yahb II (628–643/644). Its dispatch is proved by a stone stele which Jesuit missionaries discovered in 1625 in Shensi¹⁴⁸. A long inscription in Chinese commemorates *spreading the religion of light [Christianity] in the Middle Kingdom*. The emperor read the Scripture and ordered that it be distributed in his state. Then, he issued a decree ordering the erection of a monastery. By the end of the seventh century the Nestorian Christianity had found followers in ten Chinese provinces, where it grew until the ninth century, the evidence of which is provided, for example, by Arab travel accounts¹⁴⁹.

Even in this period, though, Nestorians failed to entirely avoid persecutions. Sometimes radically inclined Muslims stood behind their outbreak and sometimes dissensions between Christians themselves, their different intrigues, caused

¹⁴⁴ R. L e C o z, *Historie de L'Église d'Orient: Chrétiens d'Irak, d'Iran et de Turquie*, Paris 1995, p. 157.

¹⁴⁵ A. S. A t i y a, *Historia...*, p. 233.

¹⁴⁶ R. W a t e r f i e l d, *Christians in Persia: Assyrians, Armenians, Roman Catholics and Protestants*, Abingdon–New York 2011, p. 40.

¹⁴⁷ A. S. A t i y a, *Historia...*, p. 224.

¹⁴⁸ P. Y. S a e k i, *The Nestorian Monument in China*, London 1916.

¹⁴⁹ A. S. A t i y a, *Historia...*, p. 226. For a detailed account of the activity of the Nestorians in China under Mongol rule see: L i T a n g, *East Syriac Christianity in Mongol-Yuan China*, Wiesbaden 2011.

the intervention of outsiders. In the brief reign of 'Umar II (717–720), the oppression consisted mainly in the imposition of heavy economic burdens or in the attempts to coerce conversion to Islam by threats of death¹⁵⁰. It was not until the reign of 'Umar II's successors – that is, in the latter half of the eighth century which lies beyond the scope of this paper – that the persecution of Christians assumed a more acute form – for example, with the destruction of churches or the assault on Christian women¹⁵¹.

Gradually, the Nestorians, along with other Christians living in the Middle East, were losing their strong position. When caliphs abandoned Seleucia-Ctesiphon to build a new capital of their state in Baghdad, Patriarch Hananyeshu II (774–779)¹⁵² also decided to move his operation there. His decision can be regarded as indicating that the state began to exercise increasing influence upon the Church. And it was not long before caliphs designated themselves as arbiters adjudicating on different church disputes, including those regarding authority over the Church¹⁵³. On the other hand, patriarchs began to be dispatched to the Byzantine court as legates representing Muslim rulers. This led them to become more engaged in secular matters, sometimes to the point of being transformed into lay officials who, in an effort to secure for themselves particular positions, failed to prevent themselves from yielding to corruption¹⁵⁴. Members of the lower clergy, underpaid and with no chance for nomination to any office, often converted to Islam¹⁵⁵. Worse still, the relations between western and eastern Syrians were very tense, riven with conflicts and mutual accusations, which had the effect of making caliphs view these Christian communities as unable to protect their own interests¹⁵⁶.

¹⁵⁰ A.Ch. van Gorder, *Christianity in Persia and the Status of Non-Muslims in Iran*, Lanham 2010, p. 50.

¹⁵¹ A.S. Atiya, *Historia...*, p. 231.

¹⁵² Thanks to caliphs' favours and to bribery, the patriarch Hananyeshu II rose to political prominence. In addition to his own people, he also represented, in the Muslim lands, the Greeks, the Jacobites and the Melkites.

¹⁵³ The Metropolitans of seven cities (Jundishapur, Al-Baṣra, Mosul, Irbil, Beth-Jarma, Hulwān and Nisibis) gathered during the election of the new patriarch. Each of them was accompanied by three subordinate bishops. The patriarch elected by this assembly received investiture from the caliph who exerted a great influence on the process of election, see: S.Kh. B u k h s h, *Studies...*, p. 134.

¹⁵⁴ A.S. Atiya, *Historia...*, pp. 233–234.

¹⁵⁵ N. Lev t z i o n, *Conversion to Islam in Syria and Palestine and the Survival of Christian Communities*, [in:] *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands, 8th to 18th Centuries*, eds. M. G e r v e r s, R. B i k h a z i, Toronto 1990, p. 304.

¹⁵⁶ R. L e C o z, *Historie...*, p. 208.

3.7. The Coptic Church

We know very little about the first decades of Arab rule in Egypt. Although there survive a great number of Arab chronicles relating to the period under consideration, none of them was written earlier than the ninth century, that is, two hundred years after the events dealt with here. Non-Muslim sources, too, originate in periods later than the conquest¹⁵⁷. However, it is certain that the Arabs had got to know Egypt, Constantinople's granary, prior to the advent of Islam. 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ, the conqueror of this province, led in his youth caravans to the valley of Nile and marveled at the wealth of Alexandria. He felt great pride when informing 'Umar of the conquest of the city which had 4000 palaces, 4000 bathhouses, 400 theatres, 1200 vegetable stores and 4000 Jews paying taxes¹⁵⁸. Interestingly, the caliph was not much impressed by the news, rewarding the messenger with a loaf of bread, a bottle of olive oil and a few dates¹⁵⁹. The local population that survived the attack on the city was shown mercy: those who wanted to leave were allowed to do so, and those who wanted to stay were not forced to convert to Islam. The latter were only required to pay the land tax as long as the flooding of the Nile guaranteed good crops¹⁶⁰.

All the evidence suggests that it was not the caliph who ordered the burning of the most famous book collection of antiquity. The library is more likely to have suffered at the hands of monks or fanatical Christian groups at the turn of the fourth and fifth centuries. The Arabs were willing to learn from those whom they conquered and whose cultural standards were higher than their own. Illustrating this is an account offered by Al-Ṭabarī of the encounter between Muslim commander and some local Copts: *'Amr Ibn al-Āṣ, a great warrior and conqueror, decided to give a Bedouin feast on that occasion. He ordered the slaughter of a camel, to be later boiled in salty water. Seeing the Arabs, who were wearing their traditional clothes, bite into the meat and slurp a soup, the Copts walked away, convinced that they were dealing with people who were rude and uncouth. Having noticed their disapproving reaction, 'Amr ordered his men to put on the same clothes as those worn by the Egyptians. The Copts who arrived the fol-*

¹⁵⁷ P.M. Sijpestejin, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the Beginning of Muslim Rule*, [in:] *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300–700*, ed. R.S. Baghall, Cambridge 2007, p. 438.

¹⁵⁸ A. Sattin, *Lifting the Veil: Two Centuries of Travellers, Traders and Tourists in Egypt*, London–New York 2011, p. 154.

¹⁵⁹ Th. Vrettos, *Alexandria: City of the Western Mind*, New York 2001, pp. 213–214.

¹⁶⁰ A.L. Al-Sayyid Marsot, *A History of Egypt from the Arab Conquest to the Present*, Cambridge 2007, p. 2.

lowing day saw something very different from what they had seen the previous day. Servants offered them an array of Egyptian dishes which they ate. [The Copts] left in disbelief, saying that they had earlier been deceived¹⁶¹.

Al-Ṭabari's account manifests the Arabs' capability of adapting to local conditions, their awareness of dealing with more culturally advanced people, and their openness to local customs¹⁶². Under 'Umar's Pact, the Copts were given the status of the *dhimmi* – the people who were protected but who certainly were not treated in any preferential way¹⁶³. Like other Christians under Muslim rule, the Copts were subject to different restrictions – for example, they were required to wear some distinctive clothes and were banned from riding horses. However, in practice these laws were only rarely enforced¹⁶⁴.

The direct consequence of the Arab conquest was the Coptic Patriarch Benjamin's return from exile, in which he had spent more than a decade¹⁶⁵. Enjoying 'Amr's support, Benjamin assumed the leadership of the Coptic Church, forgave those who were guilty of apostasy from Monophysitism and opened up a number of new churches and monasteries, which he often visited, tightening their discipline and ensuring the observance of the canon law by their members¹⁶⁶. The Copts seized a number of temples and religious buildings from the Melkites. They also replaced Greeks in administrative positions, although the Arabs did not remove the Byzantine administration in order to find favors with the Copts. They simply wanted to make sure that taxes were efficiently collected. 'Amr's steps yielded a revenue of 200 million gold dinars, excluding gifts in kind¹⁶⁷.

His successors further increased this revenue, which entailed the outbreak of a number of uprisings¹⁶⁸. However grateful for the religious tolerance displayed by the Arabs, the Copts tried to avoid economic exploitation. Such an attitude translated into mass conversions to Islam, which in turn had a paradoxical effect – rather than encouraging such conversions, the Arabs, fearful of losing

¹⁶¹ Ṭabari, *Tarikh*, vol. IV, pp. 109–110.

¹⁶² M. P i n k e r, *Kopula w architekturze arabsko-muzułmańskiej w pierwszych wiekach islamu*, Warszawa 2010 [unpublished MA thesis], p. 8.

¹⁶³ A.S. A t i y a, *Historia...*, p. 109.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 72.

¹⁶⁵ The patriarch was forced by the imperial governor, Cyrus, to flee to the monastery of St Macary. Benjamin's brother joined the rebellion against Cyrus and was executed, see: S.J. D a v i s, *The Early Coptic Papacy. The Egyptian Church and Its Leadership in Late Antiquity: The Popes of Egypt*, vol. I, Cairo–New York 2004, p. 119.

¹⁶⁶ A. G r i l l m e i e r, Th. H a i n t h a l e r, *Christ in Christian Tradition, From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590–604)*, vol. II, p. 4, London 1996, pp. 81–84.

¹⁶⁷ A.S. A t i y a, *Historia...*, p. 71.

¹⁶⁸ A.L. A l - S a y y i d M a r s o t, *A History...*, p. 6.

their profits, sought to discourage the Copts from accepting their religion¹⁶⁹. On the other hand the Copts were drawn to Islam for its straightforwardness. In contradistinction to the Church troubled by Christological conflicts, the Muslims' religion was based on belief in God to whom everyone could turn without the intermediary role of clerical hierarchy¹⁷⁰.

From what has been said above it follows that the Arabs were mainly interested in preserving the *status quo* – the well-to-do Copts steadily supplying the state budget with financial means. To be sure, there occurred periods of oppression or even persecutions. However, their occurrence had more to do with the whims of individual rulers than with the conduct of any clear-cut policy. In the period under consideration, the Copts elaborated a model of peaceful coexistence with the Muslims – an achievement for which they did not have to pay with the loss of their identity. As Aziz Atiya concludes, the revival of the Coptic culture which ensued filled the gap opened up by the Byzantine civilization's gradual disappearance from the region¹⁷¹.

3.8. The Armenian Church

In the first half of the seventh century, right before the Arab invasion, the Paulician heresy, based on the belief in two Gods and two acts of creation, divided the Church in Armenia. Persecuted by the Byzantine authorities and the Church hierarchy, the Paulicians, accusing the members of this hierarchy of a lavish lifestyle, did not shy away from violence. They also sought the support of the Arabs who, while fighting against the Greeks, found nothing wrong with the local Church¹⁷². The Byzantine Empire, in turn, strove to preserve its rule at least in western Armenia, frowning upon the emancipatory ambitions of the local population.

This Greek-Arab rivalry in Armenia undermined the Armenians' political position but did no harm to the Church which, remaining in no danger of imperial intervention, emphasized its disapproval of the Chalcedon decisions and refused to be united with Constantinople¹⁷³.

¹⁶⁹ A.S. Atiya, *Historia...*, p. 71.

¹⁷⁰ M. Hanna, *O dialogu cywilizacji czyli o potrzebie akceptowania innych*, transl. J. Zdanowski, Warszawa 2004, p. 125.

¹⁷¹ A.S. Atiya, *Historia...*, p. 72.

¹⁷² N.G. Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy: A Study of the Origin and Development of Paulicianism in Armenia and the Eastern Provinces of the Byzantine Empire*, Hague–Paris 1967, p. 193.

¹⁷³ A.S. Atiya, *Historia...*, p. 282.

Catholicos Hovhannes, called the Philosopher, in addition to authoring numerous theological tracts and drawing up reforms aimed at tightening discipline in the Church, was also a diplomat who tried to better the life of his people. Legend wound itself around his encounter with caliph 'Umar II in 719¹⁷⁴. To welcome the ruler, who considered himself to be the Prophet's successor and a pious Muslim, catholicos put on extremely resplendent clothes. When asked by the caliph if Christ had not taught modesty, Hovhannes showed him a sackcloth made of goat wool which he was wearing on naked skin. 'Umar II concluded that no one could bear such suffering without God's help and promised to do everything which the saint man was going to ask him. Catholicos wanted the ruler to ban forceful conversions to Islam, to grant religious freedom and to exempt the Church and the clergy from taxes. Fulfilling these requests, the caliph also freed the Armenians from their Damascene captivity, into which they had been taken during the war¹⁷⁵.

Having received the guarantees for which he asked, Hovhannes broke relations with Byzantium, got rid of philhellenes and cracked down on the Paulicians who moved to the West. The policy aimed at achieving independence from Byzantium found its expression in the synod called by catholicos to Manzikert in 726.

After 'Umar II's death, power was assumed by Yazid II (720–724) who ordered the destruction of Christian pictures. Fortunately for the Armenians his rule did not last long. Although *'Umar's Pact* remained in force throughout the period under consideration, its regulations which banned erecting new churches and restoring the old ones were not meticulously observed – the existing temples were embellished with mosaics and icons; the new ones were built of stone and also splendidly decorated¹⁷⁶.

However, Muslim-Christian relations in Armenia also had a darker side to them – due to the outbursts of violence and persecutions which happened from time to time, the catholicos had to intervene in the Caliphate's capital on behalf of the rest of the faithful. Arab rulers treated them as chiefs of the Armenian people.

The seventh and eighth centuries mark the most important period in the history of Muslim-Christian relations. It was in the first centuries of Islam's

¹⁷⁴ Important in the context of the Byzantine-Arab relations is Leon III's letter to 'Umar II, in which the emperor responds to the caliph's request for information on the Christian faith, its dogmas and divisions within the Church. In his response the emperor draws both on the Bible and on the Qur'ān, stressing the fact that Islam is also divided. A. Jeffery, *A Ghevond's Text of the Correspondence between 'Umar II and Leo III*, HTR 37, 1944, pp. 269–332.

¹⁷⁵ S.B. Dadoyan, *The Armenians in the Medieval Islamic World. The Arab Period in Armīnyah – 7th to 11th Centuries*, vol. I, New Brunswick 2011, pp. 72–73.

¹⁷⁶ A.S. Atiyan, *Historia...*, p. 283.

existence that the two monotheistic religions came into contact with one another and became familiar with one another's beliefs and rituals. The analysis of both Christian and Muslim sources shows that the relations between the two were very complex. In this initial period of contacts, there existed a variety of attitudes which the Muslims and the Christians adopted towards each other. Christian commentators interpreted Islam's victory in a variety of ways. Either they regarded the Arab invasion as expressing the fulfillment of God's promises given to Abraham and Ishmael, or treated it in terms of the punishment inflicted by God on Christians for departing from the orthodoxy, however the latter was understood, or simply saw it as the divine retribution for various sins. Still others viewed it as an example of one of the Christian heresies.

The Muslims, on the other hand – despite the *Qur'ān*'s ambiguous view of the Christians and some persecutions to which they were subjected right after the Prophet's death – developed a peaceful attitude towards the non-Muslims. The latter were guaranteed personal safety, property rights and freedom of religion but had to bear some financial burdens and were subject to some social restrictions. The relations between religions often assumed the form of trilateral relations, those between the followers of Islam, Judaism and Christianity – with the Christians usually enjoying a better position than the Jews. Muḥammad's contacts with the latter were more frequent, which found its reflection in the *Qur'ān*.

The Islamization of the conquered population proceeded gradually. Because of the ambiguity of the word '*aslama*', to be found in Arab sources and meaning both the acceptance of Islam and surrender, the process is not easy to reconstruct. No Muslim government strove to exterminate the Christians, and attempts aimed at their mass conversions were made only very rarely. As the People of the Book the Christians were guardians of their own, though incomplete, divine revelation and, as such, deserved to be granted a degree of autonomy, to have their own leaders and to enjoy their own specific rights. At the same time they were second-class citizens, subject to Muslim rule and required to pay taxes. The religious freedom they enjoyed prevented them from disappearing into the sea of Islam.

To survive as a distinct community, the Christians developed several "cultural strategies". While some of them were employed quite extensively, others were used only sporadically and only within specific groups. According to Heleen Murre-van den Berg, these strategies involved reinterpreting pre-Islamic Christian heritage, assimilating some of the elements of the Islamic culture and isolating themselves from the Muslim environment¹⁷⁷.

¹⁷⁷ The second strategy was prevalent during the reign of the Abbasid rulers (the eleventh to twelfth centuries) while the third in the thirteenth to eighteenth centuries, although other

The first strategy was prevalent in the first two centuries after the advent of Islam, and the contacts between the Christians and Muslims that took place in this period can be referred to as “isolated development”. Both religions lived in parallel to each other, with no bridges spanning them and with no profound knowledge of one another. The Christians remained true to their local traditions and languages, and it took some time before they began to understand the significance of the Arabic language. By assimilating it, they to great degree assimilated Arab culture. Christian and Muslim thought began to permeate each other. Christian communities played a significant role in building Muslim civilization, which, quite paradoxically, was a major factor in the decline in the number of Christians in the Middle East.



forms of acculturation were also present in this period. *Introduction*, [in:] *Redefining Christian Identity. Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam*, eds. J.J. van Ginkel, H.L. Murre-Van den Berg, T.M. van Lint, Leuven-Paris-Dudley 2005, p. VIII.

4. The Byzantines in the Context of the Qurʾān

The first encounter between Islam and Byzantium was colored by positive perceptions of Byzantium's monotheism and of its upright ruler, Heraclius. Yet the empire's influence was most strongly felt as a model state, particularly in the early Islamic period, when the Muslims had no compunction about imitating the forms and practices of their imperial rival in developing what would ultimately become a distinctive Islamic civilization – writes the Lebanese scholar of the Arab-Byzantine relations, Nadia Maria El Cheikh¹. She concludes that the Arab-Byzantine relations underwent different stages, finally assuming a hostile character, which continued well into the times of the Crusades². The Arabs' positive attitude towards the Byzantines is attested to in the Qurʾān with regard to the period prior to the Conquest. However, there are some ḥadīths which seem to be heralding future, much worse relations³. The death of Muḥammad in 632 marked the end of the friendship – although for almost a decade to come, until emperor Heraclius' death in 641, the Arabs' view of the Byzantines was not unambiguously negative. The Arabic tradition, for example, created a positive image of Heraclius, whom it held up as a model of perfect ruler. However, it is difficult to state unambiguously whether positive references to the Byzantines found in the Qurʾān are connected with the image of Heraclius, or the emperor's good image is linked to the tradition which turned him into an archetype of perfect ruler already towards the end of the old Arabic period, or he figures in texts pertaining to this period by way of a backward projection, as in the accounts of Heraclius' meeting with Ḳuss ibn Sāʿida al-Iyādī, the old-Arabic orator, the bishop of Nad-jrān, whose opinion was held in high regard by the Prophet himself⁴. The dif-

¹ N.M. El Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs*, Cambridge Mass. 2004, pp. 54–55.

² *Ibidem*, pp. 226–230.

³ *Ibidem*, pp. 64–65, 70 and elsewhere in the same chapter.

⁴ M.M. Dziekan, *Ḳuss Ibn Sāʿida al-Iyādī. Legenda życia i twórczości*, Warszawa 1996, pp. 8–9.

ficulty lies mainly in the fact that the texts relating to the Qur'an, on which we rely, come from a much later period, when Byzantium was already considered the greatest enemy of the Muslim state.

4.1. The Byzantines in the Qur'an

My aim here is to examine the Qur'anic contexts of the image of the Byzantines in the early Arabic culture. It would certainly be a mistake to assume that, since the holy book of Islam – the Qur'an – is the source of this image, the contexts in question pertain only to this early period. The followers of Islam are known for treating the Qur'an as the extra-temporal source of any knowledge. Consequently, the image of Byzantium contained in it should be regarded as a constant element in the Muslims' perception of the Empire.

4.1.1. Sūra 30. *The Byzantines (Al-Rūm)*, the verses 2–4

[الم] (1)

(2) غُلِبَتِ الرُّومُ

(3) فِي أَدْنَى الْأَرْضِ وَهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ غَلَبِهِمْ سَيَغْلِبُونَ

(4) فِي بَضْعِ سِنِينَ لِلَّهِ الْأَمْرُ مِن قَبْلُ وَمِنْ بَعْدُ وَيَوْمَئِذٍ يَفْرَحُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

(5) [يَنْصُرِ اللَّهُ]

(1) A. L. M.

(2) The Romans have been defeated

(3) In a land close by; but they, [even] after [this] defeat of theirs, will soon be victorious –

(4) Within a few years, with Allāh is the Command, in the Past and in the Future: on that Day shall the Believers rejoice –

(5) With the help of Allāh⁵.

Sūra 30. *The Byzantines (Al-Rūm)* was revealed around 615/616. Of key importance in our context are the verses 2–4: those which include information on the defeat and victory of the Byzantines (the first verse is a *basmala* that does not fall within the content of the text proper). These ayats – up to the sixth one – form a distinct part of the Sūra that is unrelated to the remaining ones. In a style

⁵ *Qur'an*, transl. Y. A li (all Qur'anic citations after this translation).

proper to itself, the *Qurʾān* is not specific about the episode to which it only vaguely refers, although there is no doubt that the fragment in question concerns historical events. At the same time, as is stressed by some Muslim commentators, it also points to the events taking place in the future.

The German arabist, Theodor Nöldeke, in reference to dating the revelation of the *Sūra*, writes:

The first verses of the *Sūra* 30. must have been revealed after the Byzantines had conducted their unfortunate war with the Persians close to the border with Arabia. However, it is difficult to define which of the numerous defeats the Byzantines suffered till after the *Hidjra* be meant here; particularly as the older Muslim writers, who report these events in a confused and unreliable manner, are not corroborated by reliable Byzantine testimonies. The usual statement is, that here that defeat is meant which the Byzantines suffered at *Adhruʿat* and *Basra*, or in *Mesopotamia*, or in *Palestine* (...). Perhaps *Muḥammad* had no specific event in mind.⁶

However, there is no doubt that the *Sūra* is bound up with the Byzantine-Persian wars waged at the beginning of Heraclius' reign. The details of the commentary reflecting the Muslims' view of the events will be analyzed below. The course of the events is well-known and described in every handbook on the history of the Middle East in the seventh century⁷. For this reason, I will confine myself only to providing a brief summary of these events. It can be said that Persia's hostile attitude towards Byzantium came in the wake of emperor Maurice' fall in 602. The Persians refused to recognize Phocas, the new emperor, and gave vent to their discontent by starting hostilities the direct cause of which was the outbreak of the uprising in Edessa whose leaders sought Persia's support. The bloodiest confrontation between Persia and Byzantium came in 604. The Persians, led by shah Khusraw, seized control of a significant part of the Great Syria. In 611, they conquered Antioch. It was not until the reign of emperor Heraclius (610–641) that the situation began to change⁸. However, in the years that followed, the Byzantines were still on a losing streak. In 613 they lost Damascus and in 614 Jerusalem – to mention only the most important

⁶ T. Nöldeke, F. Schwally, *Geschichte des Qurāns*, vol. I, Leipzig 1909, pp. 149–150.

⁷ On this issue see: O. Bol'sakov, *Istorija Chalifata*, vol. I, *Islam v Aravii*. 570–633, Moskva 1989, pp. 137–140; B. Składanek, *Historia Persji*, vol. I, Warszawa 1999, pp. 254–256; W.E. Kaegi, *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium*, Cambridge 2003, pp. 156–191; *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire c. 500–1492*, ed. J. Shepard, Cambridge 2008, pp. 150–156; *Historia Iranu*, ed. A. Krasnowolska, Wrocław 2010, pp. 251–252.

⁸ J.F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century. The Transformation of a Culture*, Cambridge 1997; W.E. Kaegi, *Heraclius...*, *passim*.

losses the Empire suffered in the Arab context. *The Persians behaved like barbarian invaders. They plundered, burned and carried people off into captivity. At that stage everything worked in their favor* – writes Bogdan Składanek⁹. In addition, the Byzantines also had to struggle with the attacks of the Avars. The Persians continued seizing new territories, including Egypt and Middle Anatolia. However, after attacking Rhodes, they ran out of steam. Besides, the victories they won did not entail strengthening Persia as a state, which Heraclius managed to use to his own advantage, and the tide of the war turned. In 627, the emperor invaded Mesopotamia and inflicted defeat on the Persians at Nineveh. *Shah looked around for someone whom he could blame for the defeat. One of the Persian commanders, a Shahrbaraz¹⁰, was to be made a scapegoat, but he fled abroad¹¹*. A coup d'état took place in Persia. Khusraw was overthrown in 628 by his son Kavadh II who immediately sent peace offers to Heraclius.

Muslims were devastated by the initial defeats of the Byzantines whom they supported as the People of the Book. The Meccans, on the other hand, most of whom were still polytheists, took the side of the Persians. The view that the Sūra quoted above refers to the events under discussion is supported by a number of Qurʾānic exegetes. In this contribution I will rely on the most important, classic commentary by Abū Djaʿfar al-Ṭabarī¹². Significantly, it is also one of the most

⁹ B. Składanek, *Historia Persji...*, p. 255.

¹⁰ Most probably the real name of this person was Farrukhan. Shahrbaraz probably refers to the function he performed – literally *the wild boar of the Empire*. It is also mentioned in non-Arab sources, including the Byzantine ones. The mutiny he led even swept him into the throne, which, however, he occupied for two months only. The story which Al-Ṭabarī tells about Farrukhan and his brother Shahrbaraz is only one of the existing versions of it.

¹¹ B. Składanek, *Historia Persji...*, p. 256.

¹² Abu Djaʿfar Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī (838–923) – one of the most distinguished scholars of the Arab-Muslim world in the Middle Ages, a theologian, historian and an exegete of the Qurʾān. His most influential and best known works are his Qurʾānic commentary, *Djāmiʾ al-bayān ʿan taʾwil al-Qurʾān*, the first and probably the most important one, running to 30 volumes, drawn on extensively by later exegetes, and *Kitāb akhbār Tārīkh al-rusul wa-al-mulūk*, work in many volumes dealing with the world history up to the ninth century. It covers legends, the Arab pre-history, the life of the Prophet Muḥammad, and the Arab conquests. The scholarly literature on this author, also in western languages, is huge: F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, vol. I, Leiden 1967, pp. 323–328; C.E. Bosworth, *Aṭ-Ṭabarī*, [in:] *EI*, vol. X, pp. 11–15; V.I. Beljaev, *Predislovie*, [in:] *Istorija at-Tabari*, Taškent 1987, pp. 5–13; M.M. Dziekan, *Bagdad mityczny. Opis powstania miasta w Historii Aṭ-Ṭabariego*, SAI 6, 1988, pp. 103–122; B. Shoshan, *Poetics of Islamic Historiography. Deconstructing of Tabarī's History*, Leiden–Boston 2004, *passim*; J. Danecki, *Podstawowe wiadomości o islamie*, Warszawa 2007, pp. 76–77; F.A. Jakubowski, *Wstęp*, [in:] Abū Ḡaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Ḡarīr Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Historia proroków i królów. Z dziejów Bizancjum (do połowy VII w.)*. *Tārīḥ ar-rusul wa-al-mulūk*, Poznań 2011, pp. XXIV–XLII.

detailed and extensive commentaries available. Al-Ṭabarī deals with some controversies surrounding the Qur'ānic verses under discussion. Here is the translation of the relevant fragment.

The Byzantines have been defeated'¹³ (Sūra 30:2). The recitators differ from each other in reading this fragment.

Most of cities' recitators (*amṣār*), read *Ghulibat Al-Rūm* with *ḍamma*¹⁴ over the letter *ghayn*, which means that the Persians defeated the Byzantines. They follow Ibn 'Umar¹⁵ and Abū Sa'id¹⁶ in saying: Ibn Wākī' told us: my father told me quoting Al-Ḥasan al-Djafarī and Salīṭ¹⁷ who said: I heard Ibn 'Umar recite: '*Alif. Lām. Mīm. Ghalabat Ar-Rum* – the Byzantines were victorious'¹⁸. He was asked: O, Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān, whom did they defeat? He replied: The province of Syria. However, I am of the opinion that the only right and true lesson is: '*Alif. Lām. Mīm.* the Romans have been defeated', with *ḍamma* over the letter *ghayn*, for this is the interpretation accepted by most recitators. If this is the case, then the way the words should be explained is as follows: 'The Persians defeated the Byzantines'. Other commentators hold the same view. (...) Ibn 'Abbās¹⁹ said: the Muslims wanted the Byzantines, the people of the Book, to win, while the idolaters²⁰ wanted the Persians to win, as the latter also worshipped idols. They told Abū Bakr about it and he reported this to the Prophet who recited: Verily, they will be defeated. He conveyed this message to the idolaters and they replied: Let us make a temporary peace. If you win, things will be this way for you and if we win things will be this way for us. Then they concluded a peace treaty for five years. This period elapsed and they did not become victors. Abū Bakr told the Prophet, Peace be upon Him, about it and He replied: Let this be about ten years.

¹³ *Qur'ān*, 30:2 (Sūra *Al-Rūm*, i.e. *the Romans*; it means in this case – *the Byzantines*). Some fragments that, in being grammar commentaries, are not directly bound up with the issue under discussion have been omitted from this translation, as have the repetitions of some lines. All the omissions (except for *isnāds*, that is, chains of narrators) are marked by square brackets.

¹⁴ *Ḍamma* is a vocal sign that stands for *u*.

¹⁵ 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Umar (died 692), the son of the caliph 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghābah*, vol. III, pp. 340–345; N.M. El Chéikh, *Muḥammad and Heraclius: A Study in Legitimacy*, StI 89, 1999, p. 358.

¹⁶ Probably Abū Sa'id al-Khudārī, the Prophet's companion who reported ḥadīths (died in 693). See: F. Sezgin, *Geschichte...*, vol. I, pp. 505, 789; M.Z. Siddiqi, *Ḥadīth Literature: Its Origin, Development and Special Features*, Cambridge 1993, p. 18.

¹⁷ The Prophet's companion, died in 632.

¹⁸ The full chain of narrators is mentioned here in order to demonstrate the style of this account; in the texts that follow this one I mention only the last one in the chain of narrators, since the full *isnāds* are irrelevant for our analysis.

¹⁹ 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Abbās (died around 686), theologian, the first exegete of the Qur'ān, and one of the first followers of Islam. Cf. L. Vezzia Vaglieri, *Abd Allāh B. al-'Abbās*, [in:] *EI*, vol. I, pp. 40–41; M.M. Dzickan, *Pisarze arabsko-muzułmańscy VII–XX w.*, Warszawa 2003, p. 57.

²⁰ The Meccans who did not accept Islam.

Sa'id added: a few [*biḍ'*]²¹ is less than ten. Then the Prophet said: The Byzantines were defeated and then they were victorious. It concerns these words: The Byzantines were defeated in a land close by; but they, after this defeat of theirs, will be victorious within a few years. With God is the Decision, both in the past and in the future. And on that Day the faithful will rejoice at God's victory²². Sufyān²³ then said: I was told that they became victorious on the same day when the battle of Badr took place²⁴.

Ibn 'Abbās said: The words from '*Alif. Lām. Mim.* The Romans have been defeated' to the words 'and on that Day they will rejoice' concerned the Persians and the Byzantines. First the Persians defeated the Byzantines and then Byzantium won a victory. On the day when the battle between the Persians and the Byzantines took place, God's Prophet fought against the idolatrous Arabs. The People of the Book defeated the idolatrous Persians [*'Adjam* in Arabic] and the faithful rejoiced that God gave victory to them and to the People of the Book who also fought against the idolaters. 'Aṭṭiyya said²⁵: I inquired Abū Sa'id al-Khudārī about it and he replied: there was a battle between Muḥammad, God's Prophet, and the idolatrous Arabs and between the Byzantines and the Persians. God gave us victory over the idolatrous Arabs and the People of the Book owed Him a victory over the worshippers of fire [*madjūs* in Arabic]. It concerns the words 'and on that Day the faithful will rejoice'.

Tkrima reported²⁶: Byzantium and Persia were at war with each other in a land close by. It is said that Adhru'at²⁷ was then the closest land. That is where the battle took place, and the Byzantines suffered a resounding defeat. This event was reported to the Prophet, Peace be upon Him, and to his companions when they were in Mecca. It saddened them immensely because the Prophet did not want illiterate worshippers of fire to defeat the People of the Book of Byzantium²⁸. But the Infidels of Mecca were delighted and cursed. They met the Prophet's companions, Peace be upon Him, and said: You are the People of the Book as are the Christians and we are illiterate. And our brothers from Persia inflicted defeat on your brothers from Byzantium. If you started fighting against us, we would recognize you. Then God revealed: 'the Byzantines were defeated in a land close by, but they, after this defeat of theirs, will be victorious within a few years. With God is the Decision, both in the past and in the future. And on that

²¹ In Arabic "a few years" is *biḍ' sinīn*. In their commentaries exegetes often raise the question of to how many *biḍ'*, that is, "a few" refers.

²² *Qur'an*, 30:4–5.

²³ Sufyān Ibn 'Uyayna (725–811), a distinguished commentator of tradition, exegete and a Muslim lawyer. F. Sezgin, *Geschichte...*, vol. I, p. 96.

²⁴ The first victory the Muslims won over the Quraysh in 624.

²⁵ 'Aṭṭiyya Ibn S'ad al-Kūfi (died in 729), one of the most important interpreters of the Qur'an. F. Sezgin, *Geschichte...*, vol. I, pp. 30–31.

²⁶ An expert on ḥadīths and exegete of the Qur'an, died in 723. F. Sezgin, *Geschichte...*, vol. I, p. 23.

²⁷ The old name of the city Daraa.

²⁸ In Arabic original there is an interesting play on words here. The Persians are called "illiterate" – *ummiyyūn*, which is designed to contrast starkly with those who have Scripture – *Ahl al-Kitāb*.

Day the faithful will rejoice at God's victory.' Then Abū Bakr addressed the infidels: Did you rejoice at your brothers' victory over our brothers? Do not rejoice. God will not gladden your eyes. Verily, God Almighty, Byzantium will defeat Persia. He informed our Prophet, Peace be upon Him, about it. Then Ubayy Ibn Khalaf said²⁹: you lie, Abū Fuḍayl! To this Abū Bakr replied: You are a liar, God's enemy! I will leave ten she-camels as a pledge and so will you. If Byzantium defeats Persia, you will pay. We will wait three years. Then Abū Bakr went to the Prophet and told him about everything. The Prophet replied: That is not what I said, *bid'* amounts to between 3 and 9. Go back to him, raise the bet and extend the deadline. Abū Bakr left and, having met Ubayy, asked: Do you regret? – No, I do not. – Then I raise the bet and extend the deadline: one hundred she-camels and nine years – Agreed.

ʿIkrima reported: There was a woman in Persia who gave birth to heroic kings only. Khusraw summoned her and said: I want to send the army to fight against Byzantium and I want to put one of your sons in its command. Who is best suited to this task? She pointed to one and said: this one is more cunning than a fox, sharper than a shrike, this is Farrukhan, he is more piercing than the blade of a spear, and this is Shahrbaraz, he is greathearted. Put any one of them in command of your army. I will appoint the greathearted – and he selected Shahrbaraz. The latter set out to fight against the Byzantines and won, destroying their cities and clearing their olive groves. Abū Bakr said³⁰: I told 'Aṭā' al-Khurāsānī³¹ this story and he asked: Have you not seen Syria? I replied: No, I have not!. Then He said: If you were there you would see destroyed cities and grubbed-up olive groves. Later, when I got to Syria, I saw everything. 'Aṭā' al-Khurāsānī said: Yaḥyā Ibn Ya'mar³² told me that the emperor sent the man known by the name of Kitma³³ at the head of the Byzantine troops, and Khusraw sent Shahrbaraz. Both armies met near Adhru'at and Bosra, and it was the furthest Syria for them. Persia attacked Byzantium and won a victory. The infidel Quraysh were pleased about what happened while the Muslims were discontent. And God revealed: *'Alif. Lām. Mīm.* The Romans have been defeated in a land close by'. ʿIkrima later told the same story and added: Shahrbaraz crushed them and, destroying their cities, reached the Gulf³⁴. Then Khusraw passed away. Shahrbaraz and his men received the message about his death. Then the Byzantines stopped them and killed them. ʿIkrima said in his account: when Persia defeated Byzantium Farrukhan was sitting and drinking. He said to his men: I saw myself sitting on Khusraw' throne. The king who learned about this wrote to Shahrbaraz: When you receive my letter, send me Farrukhan's head. He answered the letter: My King, verily, you will not find a man like Farrukhan. He is filled with vengeance and strength to strike at the ene-

²⁹ One of the most implacable enemies of the Prophet, killed in the battle of Uḥud in 625.

³⁰ It is difficult to say which Abū Bakr is meant here – it cannot have been Abū Bakr as-Ṣiddīq who died in 634 and who, consequently, could not have met 'Aṭā' al-Khurāsānī.

³¹ 'Aṭā' al-Khurāsānī (670–757), an exegete of the Qur'an and traditionist.

³² Yaḥyā Ibn Ya'mar (died in 707), an exegete of the Qur'an and author of the oldest surviving work on the ways reciting the Qur'an (*kirā'a*). F. Sezgin, *Geschichte...*, vol. I, p. 5.

³³ Attempts to identify the person have been unsuccessful.

³⁴ The text probably refers here to the Mediterranean Sea.

my – so do not do it. Now the king answered the letter: He enjoys significant support among the Persians. Send me his head as soon as you can. Shahrbaraz did not carry out this order, which angered the king who did not answer the letter. Instead, he sent a mail to the Persians: I dismissed Shahrbaraz and put Farrukhan in command. And he attached a small note to the mail: When Farrukhan is appointed and Shahrbaraz submits to his brother, give it to him. When Shahrbaraz read it he said: I listen and I am obedient! He descended from his seat and put Farrukhan on it, giving him the letter. Farrukhan then said: Bring Shahrbaraz here. He then ordered his men to decapitate him. Yet he said: Do not do it until I draw up my last will and testament. This is so – he said and ordered that a receptacle be brought to him. He took three letters out of it and said: in all of these letters I interceded with Khusraw on your behalf, and you wanted to kill me because of one letter. He relinquished his authority and wrote to the emperor of Byzantium: I would like to discuss something with you but I cannot write about it. That is why we should meet face to face. Take fifty Byzantines with you and I will take fifty Persians. The emperor arrived with five hundred thousand Byzantines and observed the road carefully. He was afraid that he had been deceived. However, he noticed Shahrbaraz approaching with fifty men. Rejoicing at their meeting, they entered a special tent which had been put up especially for them. Each of them was carrying a knife. They called in an interpreter. Me and my brother are those who, through courage and cunning, destroyed your cities. Khusraw grew envious of our success and wanted me to kill my brother, but I refused. Then he ordered my brother to kill me. So we decided to throw over Khusraw and support you against him. The emperor said: You did the right thing. Then they pointed at one another which meant that they were supposed to guard their secret. It would spread very quickly if it got out. He said: Of course. And they both killed the interpreter, each of them using his own knife. Soon Khusraw died by God's will. The news reached the Prophet on Al-Hudaybiyya day. He rejoiced as did everyone who was with him³⁵. Ḳatāda said³⁶: *Alif. Lām. Mīm*. The Romans have been defeated. They were defeated by the Persians in a land close by, but after this defeat of theirs, they will be victorious. He said: When God revealed these verses the Muslims believed their Lord and knew that the Byzantines would defeat the Persians. They bet the idolaters five young she-camels that within five years the Byzantines would defeat the Persians. In making the bet, the Muslims were represented by Abū Bakr while the idolaters by Abū Ubayy Ibn Khalaf. When the appointed period was running out and the Byzantines did not defeat the Persians the idolaters asked about their prize. The Prophet's companions asked him about it too and he replied: you made a mistake by fixing the period of less than ten years, for "a few" is a figure between three and ten, so you need to extend the period. They did so, and God gave Byzantium victory over Persia at the end of

³⁵ The agreement concluded in 628 between Muḥammad and the Meccans which allowed the Prophet to enter Mecca in 630 and seize control of it. M. G a u d e f r o y - D e m o m b y n e s, *Narodziny islamu*, transl. H. O l ę d z k a, Warszawa 1988, pp. 122–123.

³⁶ Ḳatāda Ibn Di'āma (679–735) – blind since his birth and known for excellent memory, he was a reporter of ḥadīths and genealogy. F. S e z g i n, *Geschichte...*, vol. I, pp. 31–32; Ch. P e l l a t, *Ḳatāda Ibn Di'āma*, [in:] *EI*, vol. IV, p. 748.

these “a few” years. It happened during the return from Al-Hudaybiyya. The Muslims rejoiced at the agreement that had been reached and at the fact that the People of the Book defeated the worshippers of fire. And in this way Allāh strengthened their faith as in His words: ‘And on that day the faithful will rejoice at God’s victory. (...)’ ‘Abd Allāh said: the Persians defeated the Byzantines. The idolaters wanted Persia to defeat Byzantium, while the Muslims wanted the Byzantines to defeat the Persians because the former are the People of the Book and, as such, are closer to their own religion. That is why, when the verses from ‘the Byzantines were defeated’ to ‘within a few years’ were revealed, they said: Abū Bakr, your companion says that Byzantium will defeat Persia within a few years. Yes – he said. Then they asked: Do you want to bet? And they bet him four she-camels for seven years. Seven years elapsed and nothing happened. The idolaters recalled this fact and began to put pressure on the Muslims who told the Prophet about it. The Prophet asked: What do you mean by “a few years”? they said: Less than ten. Then he replied: Then there are two years left. Finally riders arrived bringing information that Byzantium defeated Persia. The Muslims were very glad and God revealed: ‘*Ali. Laf. Mim.* The Romans have been defeated’. It is the promise of Allāh. Never does Allāh fail from His promise!’³⁷ ‘Abd Allāh said: And Byzantium survived (...)

Ibn ‘Abbās said: (...) as far as ‘they will be victorious’ [*sayaghlibūn*] is concerned, most recitators reads it with *fatha*³⁸ over the speech sound *yā*, and it needs to be read as *Alif. Lām. Mim. Ghalabat Ar-Rūm*, with *fatha* over *ghayn*, so as to be able to recite *sayughlabūn* [‘they will be defeated’] with *damma* over *yā*. Then it can be interpreted as meaning: after their victory over Persia they will be defeated by the Muslims. Thus everything falls into place³⁹. The words would not make much sense if one put *fatha* over the letter *yā*. It is because we move from the event that has already happened to the one that may happen. It would mean the a destruction of one information by the other. As far as the words: ‘within a few years’ are concerned, we have already mentioned disagreements among the exegetes concerning the meaning of “a few” and we have found the right solution. That is why there is no point in going over this again here.⁴⁰

The commentary begins with what appears to be a very learned philological discussion, which, however, is of concern not only to philologists. It indicates two stages of the Byzantine-Persian wars. The second *āyāt* is regarded as recounting the events of 614 – especially the Persian conquest of Jerusalem, the city that had already become very important to the Muslims. The *āyāt*s 3–4 herald Byz-

³⁷ The beginning of the verse 6.

³⁸ *Fatha* – in Arabic script a diacritical sign denoting *a*.

³⁹ For more on this issue see: T. Nöldeke, F. Schwaiblmair, *Geschichte des Qorāns...*, p. 149, footnote 7.

⁴⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. XVIII, pp. 446–459. I omit brief remarks on the verses 3 and 4 as they repeat the information given above. Al-Ṭabarī gives an account of these events in his *History* in the chapter on king Khusraw Parwiz, the son of Hurmuz (especially pp. 181–187). In this account Al-Ṭabarī in part repeats fragments included in his *Tafsīr*. He also refers to some Qur’anic expressions (explaining, for example, how the term “the closest country” needs to be understood).

The words refer to the People of the Book, the Jews, the Christians and all who follow in their steps. "Say: O, the People of the Book! Come to the word". It is about a useful word, which he described later, saying: "the same for you and for us". Thus it has to be equitable between you and us.

And he goes on to explain: that we will not worship except God and not associate anything with Him. No idol, no cross, no statue, no fire nor anything else. We should worship One God only who has no companions. That is a message sent by all prophets. God Almighty said: we sent no messenger before you to whom we would not give revelation: 'There is no god but I; therefore worship and serve Me' [21, 25].

And he said: we assuredly sent amongst every people a Messenger (with the Command): 'Serve Allāh and eschew Evil' [16, 36]. And he said: so that none of us chooses anyone else for his lord, except God. Ibn Djuraydj explains⁴²: So that none of us makes others commit a sin against our Lord. 'Ikrima said: they prostrated themselves before each other.

He said: If then they turn back, say *yā'*: 'Bear witness that we at least are Muslims (bowing to Allāh's Will): That is, if they turn away from these words and from this call, bear witness to the submission to God-ordained authority.

We have referred to the commentaries by Al-Bukhārī⁴³, who, in giving his account, followed Az-Zuhri⁴⁴, Ubayd Allāh, Ibn 'Abd Allāh, Ibn Mas'ūd⁴⁵, Ibn 'Abbās, Abu Sufyān⁴⁶. Abu Sufyān came to emperor Heraclius. The emperor asked him about God's messenger's descent, Peace be upon Him⁴⁷, about his traits and about his message. He answered him truthfully. At that time Abu Sufyān was still a pagan and accepted Islam sometime later. His acceptance of Islam took place after the Al-Ḥudaybiyya agreement and before the takeover of Medina.

wa-an-nihāja (*The Beginning and the End*). He is also author of a famous commentary on Islam and a short history of the Sacred Book of Islam (*Faḍā'il al-Kur'ān*). Cf. H. L a o u s t, *Ibn Kathir*, [in:] *EI*, vol. III, pp. 817–818; M. M. D z i e k a n, *Pisarze arabsko-muzułmańskie...*, p. 64.

⁴² A lawyer and expert on ḥadīths, died in 767. F. S e z g i n, *Geschichte...*, vol. I, p. 91.

⁴³ Kathir refers here to a collection of ḥadīths by Al-Bukhārī (died in 870) – one of the most distinguished traditionists. See: Ch. M e l c h e r t, *Al-Bukhārī*, [in:] *EI*, vol. II, pp. 54–58; K. K o ś c i e l n i a k, *Tradycja muzulmańska na tle akulturacji chrześcijańsko-islamskiej od VII do X w.: geneza, historia i znaczenie zapożyczeń nowotestamentowych w hadisach*, Kraków 2001, pp. 122–125.

⁴⁴ A traditionist, historian and a connoisseur of poetry, died in 742. He is described as *the first one who transmitted tradition – awal man asnada al-hadith*. F. S e z g i n, *Geschichte...*, vol. I, pp. 280–283.

⁴⁵ He lived in the seventh century and was one of the seven *ṣaḥīḥs/ṣaḥāḥ* of Medina.

⁴⁶ He died around 653, a Quraysh leader from the Umayyad family/line. At first, he was the Prophet's enemy, but he went over to his side. He was father of the first caliph from the Umayyad dynasty, Mu'awiya. See: W. M o n t g o m e r y W a t t, *Abū Sufyān*, [in:] *EI*, vol. I, p. 131; D. M a d e y s k a, *Abu Sufjan*, [in:] *Mały słownik kultury świata arabskiego*, Warszawa 1971, p. 23.

⁴⁷ In conformity with the rule I decided to follow here, this is how I translate an Arab eulogy *ṣallā Allāhu 'alayhi wa-sallam*.

It is presented in the ḥadīth as follows: Heraclius asked Abu Sufyān:

– Are you unfaithful?

I answered: No, we have known him for a long time and we have never heard him do any such thing.

And Abu Sufyān went on: that is all I could add.

And it was all about the way he spoke: Then the letter from God's Messenger, Peace be upon Him, was brought⁴⁸ and he read it. It said as follows:

In the name of Merciful God. From Muḥammad's, God's Prophet, to Heraclius, the great ruler of Byzantium. Peace be upon him who follows the right path. And he goes on: Next, I summon thee with the appeal of Islam: become a Moslem and thou shalt be safe. God shall give thee thy reward twofold. But if thou decline then thee will sin like all your subjects⁴⁹. 'O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allāh; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than Allāh'. If then they turn back, say ye: 'Bear witness that we [at least] are Muslims [bowing to Allāh's Will]' (Sūra 3:64).

⁴⁸ There exists a huge body of orientalist and Muslim literature on Muḥammad's letter to Heraclius (I present the letter below): L. Caetani, *Annali dell'Islam*, vol. I, Milano 1905, pp. 731–734; M.H. Haykal, *The Life of Muḥammad*, n.p. 1976, pp. 374–375; M. Gaudetroy-Demombynes, *Narodzhyny...*, pp. 132–134; M. Hamidullah, *Six originaux des lettres diplomatiques du Prophète de l'islam. Etude paléographique et historique des lettres du Prophète*, Paris 1985; H.M.B.U.D.M. Ahmad, *Życie świętego Proroka Muhammada*, transl. M. Nowak, Islamabad 1994, pp. 126–131; M. Hamidullah, *La lettre du Prophète à Héraclius et le sort de l'original*, Ara 2.1, 1995, pp. 97–110; N.M. El Cheikh, *Byzantium...*, pp. 43–46; eadem, *Muḥammad and Heraclius...*, pp. 5–21; L.I. Conrad, *Heraclius in Early Islamic Kerygma*, [in:] *The Reign of Heraclius (610–641): Crisis and Confrontation*, eds. G.J. Reinink, B.H. Stolte, Leuven–Paris–Dudley MA 2002, pp. 113–156; S.Z. Mirza, *Oral Tradition and Scribal Conventions in the Documents Attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad*, Ann Arbor 2010. M. Rodinson makes no mention of the Prophet's letter (M. Rodinson, *Mahomet*, transl. F. Michalska-Nová, Warszawa 1994), while I. Hrbek and K. Petraček make only a passing reference to it (I. Hrbek, K. Petraček, *Mahomet*, transl. G. Matuzyński, A. Mrozek, Warszawa 1971, pp. 105–106). However, those authors, too, neglect to mention that Heraclius was one of those to whom the Prophet was to send his letter.

⁴⁹ There appears here a problematic word which has already received a lot of attention from scholars. In Ibn Kathīr it is *arisiyyūn*, while in Al-Ṭabarī's *History – akkārūn*. L.I. Conrad provides an account of the scholarly discussion devoted to the word (L.I. Conrad, *Heraclius in Early...*, pp. 127–129). Most convincing seem to be the views suggesting that the word refers to Arianism or generally to "heresy"; as far as *akkārūn* – "peasants" is concerned, in some sources there appears here the word *fallāḥūn*. For the sake of simplicity, as the problem is irrelevant for our analysis, I translate the word as "subjects", drawing here on A. Abul Hasan Alim Nadwi (S.A.H.A. Nadwi, *Muḥammad Rasūlullāh. The Apostle of Mercy*, Karachi n.d., p. 250: *the rest of your subjects and followers*) and M.H. Haykal (*The Life...*, p. 365). M. Hamidullah offers the following translation: *paysans retombera sur toi* (*La lettre...*, p. 99).

Muḥammad Ibn Ishāk⁵⁰ and others mentioned that the beginning of the Sūra 'Imrān's Family up until the verse eighty-some was revealed on the occasion of the arrival of a delegation from Nadjrān. Az-Zuhri recounted this: [The people of Nadjrān] were the first to pay *ḍjizya* and there is no doubt that the verse of *ḍjizya*⁵¹ was revealed after the capture [of Mecca], what is then a connection between what Muḥammad Ibn Ishāk and Az-Zuhri say and the assertion that the verse was recorded in the letter to Heraclius before the capture? This can be answered in a variety of ways. First, it was revealed twice, for the first time by Ḥudaybiyya and then after the capture of Mecca. The other possibility is that the beginning of the Sūra 'Imrān's Family up until that verse was revealed on the occasion of the arrival of a delegation from Nadjrān and that the verse itself was revealed earlier. And Ibn Ishāk's testimony about eighty-some verses is not reliable in view of the proof provided by Abu Sufyān. The third possibility is that the delegation of Nadjrān arrived before Al-Ḥudaybiyya and what they brought had nothing to do with *ḍjizya* but was aimed at reinforcing their request. Thus it can be regarded as having served as a way of confirming the peace (...). Fourth, it is also possible that the verse was not yet revealed at the time when God's messenger, Peace be upon him, ordered the inclusion of it in his letter to emperor Heraclius. It was only later that Qur'ān's proper fragment was sent down as remaining in line with these words.⁵²

In the above commentary only a letter to emperor Heraclius is mentioned. Although the focus of this paper is on Byzantium, it must be added that similar letters were, according to Islamic tradition, sent to other rulers of the neighboring countries. The letters sent by the Prophet, which I would like to present here in greater detail, are discussed by Al-Ṭabarī in the chapter on the events taking place in the seventh year after Hidjra⁵³. As usually, he mentions several, slightly different versions. Below I quote two complementary variants:

⁵⁰ Ibn Ishāk (died in 768) was a historian and Prophet Muḥammad's first biographer. His most important work is Prophet's biography that survives only in Ibn Hishām's modified version entitled *Sīrat Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh* or *As-Sīra an-nabawīyya*. F. Sezgin, *Geschichte...*, vol. I, pp. 288–290; J.B.M. Jones, *Ibn Ishāk*, [in:] *EI*, vol. III, pp. 810–811; M.M. Dzian, *Pisarze arabsko-muzułmańscy...*, p. 62.

⁵¹ Pertaining to *ḍjizya* (a tax levied on an Islamic state's non-Muslim subjects) is 29 verse of Sūra 9.

⁵² Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, pp. 55–57. Two historical comparisons irrelevant for the problem under discussion are omitted from this translation.

⁵³ For the translation of the text I rely on the following edition: Ṭabarī, *Tarikh*, ed. M.A.F. Ibrahim, vol. II, pp. 644–646.

In that year, in the month *Dhū al-Hidjja*⁵⁴ the Prophet, Peace be upon him, sent Ḥāṭib Ibn Balta'a⁵⁵ of the tribe Lakhm, (...) to Al-Muḥawḳis⁵⁶, Shudjā' Ibn Wahb⁵⁷ (...) to Al-Harith Ibn Abī Shamir al-Ghassānī⁵⁸, Dihya Ibn Khalifa al-Kalbī⁵⁹ to the emperor [*kaysar*]. He sent Salīḥ Ibn 'Amr al-'Āmirī 'Āmir Ibn Lu'ī to Ḥawza Ibn 'Alī al-Ḥanafī⁶⁰. And he sent 'Abd Allāh Ibn Ḥudhāfa al-Salmī⁶¹ to Khusraw [*Kisrā*]⁶². And 'Amr Ibn Umayya ad-Damīrī⁶³ to Negus [*An-Nadjāshī*]⁶⁴.

God's Prophet, Peace be upon him, sent Salīḥ Ibn 'Amr (...) to Ḥawza Ibn 'Alī, the ruler of Al-Yamāma. And he sent Al-'Alā' Ibn al-Ḥaḍramī⁶⁵ to Al-Mundhir Ibn Sāwā⁶⁶ (...), the ruler of Al-Baḥrayn, 'Amr Ibn Al-Āṣ⁶⁷ to Azdits Djayfar Ibn Djulandā and 'Abbād Ibn Djulandā⁶⁸, the rulers of Oman. He sent Ḥāṭib Ibn Abī Balta'a to Al-

⁵⁴ 1 *Dhū al-Hidjja* 7 year from Hidjra corresponds to 1 April 629. There are different accounts of when the envoys in question set out on their mission. Some sources say that they all set out at the same time, others that at intervals. See: M. Haykal, *The Life...*, pp. 364–365.

⁵⁵ He died around 684. He was the Prophet's companion and one of the earliest followers of Islam. He took part in the first most important battles fought by the Muslims.

⁵⁶ See below.

⁵⁷ He was the Prophet's companion and one of the earliest followers of Islam. He participated in Hidjra to Abyssinia.

⁵⁸ Governor of Damascus from the Ghassānid tribe.

⁵⁹ Dihya Ibn Khalifa al-Kalbī (died around 670). The Prophet's companion, he is a mysterious figure. According to some accounts, he was so beautiful that Archangel Gabriel himself assumed his form. He participated in the Battle of the Trench and in the battle of Yarmūk. H. Lammens, Ch. Pellat, *Dihya (or Dahya) b. Khalifa al-Kalbi*, [in:] *EI*, vol. III, pp. 274–275.

⁶⁰ A tribe leader and old Arabic poet.

⁶¹ The Prophet's companion. Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghābah*, vol. III, pp. 211–213.

⁶² Khusraw II Parviz (591–628), a Persian ruler from the Sassanid dynasty. B. Skladanek, *Historia Persji...*, p. 256; S.A.H.A. Nadwi, *Muḥammad...*, pp. 254–256.

⁶³ The Prophet's companion and his close associate. Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghābah*, vol. IV, pp. 193–194.

⁶⁴ Negus was an official title borne by Abyssinia's rulers. In our case the text refers to a ruler who is known in the sources as Al-Aṣḥam Ibn Abdjar. See: E. van Donzel, *An-Nadjāshī*, [in:] *EI*, vol. VII, pp. 862–864.

⁶⁵ The Prophet's companion. Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghābah*, vol. IV, pp. 74–75.

⁶⁶ A ruler from the area of Persian Gulf. A Christian in the Pre-Muslim period, he converted to Islam and contributed to the spread of the new religion. J.M. Kister, *Al-Mundhir B. Sāwā*, [in:] *EI*, vol. VII, pp. 570–572.

⁶⁷ 'Amr Ibn Al-Āṣ (594–around 664), one of the most distinguished leaders of the early Islam and conqueror of Egypt. A.J. Wensink, *'Amr b. al-'Āṣ*, [in:] *EI*, vol. I, p. 451; F. Bocheński, *'Amr ibn al-'As*, [in:] *Maty słownik...*, pp. 59–60.

⁶⁸ Oman's rulers were converted to Islam by 'Amr Ibn Al-Āṣ. As S.A.H.A. Nadwi says that *djulandā* is not a proper noun but the name of religious leader. S.A.H.A. Nadwi, *Letters to Monarchs*, <http://www.nusrah.com/en/his-biography/Muhammad-rasulullah/373.letters-to-monarchs.htm>.

-Muḳawḳis, the ruler of Alexandria (...). And the Prophet sent Dihya Ibn Khalifa al-Kalbī and Al-Khazradjī⁶⁹ to emperor Heraclius, the ruler of Byzantium. When he arrived with a letter from the Prophet, Peace be upon Him, he placed the letter between his thighs and side.

The context of sending these “ambassadors” (accounts do not tally here) was interestingly described by Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam in *Futūḥ Miṣr* (*The Conquest of Egypt*). Living before Al-Ṭabarī, Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam⁷⁰ was the historian who, in writing the work mentioned above, drew on Ibn Ishāq.

In the sixth year after Hidjra of God’s Prophet, Peace be upon Him, the Prophet returned from Al-Ḥudaybiyya and sent his men to rulers. (...) One day He ascended the *minbar*, praised God and said: Next I wish to send some of you to alien kings, but do not disperse like the Jews in front of Jesus, Mary’s son. God, Praise be unto Him, revealed to Jesus that he must send his men to earthly kings, so Jesus sent Apostles. Those who were sent to the nearby territories were pleased, those sent far away, were not, and they said: I do not like it is me whom you send there. To this Jesus said: God Almighty, I ordered my disciples to do as You told me, but they were not pleased with it. Then God revealed: I will give you an advice! And suddenly they all began to speak different languages. Each of them spoke a language used in a land to which he was to be sent. To this Muhādīr said: O, God’s Prophet, we will never speak against your orders. Send us wherever you want!⁷¹

Thus, Muḥammad’s alleged correspondence covered the regions of Syria, northern and eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula, Iran, Ethiopia, Egypt and of course Byzantium. In what follows I shall focus on the last two territories, as well as on the two figures that played important roles in their respective histories: Heraclius and Al-Muḳawḳis.

The question of the authenticity of the letters mentioned above remains open to debate, as does the fact of Muḥammad sending his emissaries to the rulers of the neighboring countries. That the envoys were actually dispatched is accepted by all Arab authors – classical, post-classical, those living in the nineteenth century⁷², and modern. In the mid-nineteenth century the issue began to attract the attention of orientalists. It can be said that contemporary scholars

⁶⁹ Al-Khazradjī Ibn ‘Āmir, Dihya’s grandfather. Ṭ a b a r ī, *Tarikh*, vol. II, p. 646, footnote 1.

⁷⁰ Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam (died in 871), an Arab lawyer and historian, he is in the first place known for the work quoted above, that is, the oldest description of the Muslim conquest of Egypt. F. R o s e n t h a l, *Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam*, [in:] *EI*, vol. III, pp. 674–675.

⁷¹ Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, p. 64. Cf. Ibn Ḥishām, ed. A. Hidjazi as-Saqa, vol. IV, pp. 339–450.

⁷² A. A n - N a s ī r ī, *Kitāb al-istiḳṣā li-akhbār duwal al-Maghrib al-Aqṣā*, ed. M. Uthman, vol. I, Bayrut 2010, p. 329.

tend to regard these accounts as having had no basis in reality. This view rests on a thorough analysis of non-Arab sources and of a variety of Arab texts that differ from one another both in terms of the details they contain and in terms of the way they treat the issues considered by western historiography as fundamental, such as, for example, chronology⁷³. Muḥammad's correspondence with Khusraw, being part of the same corpus of texts as the letters under discussion, is viewed by the Russian scholar Aly Kolesnikov as authentic⁷⁴.

It would be difficult to find a present-day Muslim historian of the early Islam who denies the authenticity of the events in question, the more so as the exegetic literature considers them to be part of the sacred history of Islam. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal (died in 1956), the author of one of the most popular biographies of the Prophet, abstained from providing any critical comment on the issue⁷⁵. The Pakistani scholar Abul Hasan Nadwi (died in 1999) also did not question the belief that the events alluded to in the accounts quoted above actually took place. The same holds true for Muḥammad Hamidullah. Neither in his monograph nor in the article published in one of the leading journals in Arabic studies, I have mentioned above, does he attempt to cast any doubts on the historicity of the events in question. M.H. Haykal and S.A.H.A. Nadwi seem not to notice the western discussion of the topic, although it is highly unlikely that these scholars – both of whom draw on western literature – are unfamiliar with it. Worth noting is also the opinion expressed by the Christian Arab from Lebanon, Nuṣrī Salhab, the author of many books on Islam. Convinced of the reliability of the accounts in question, he considers the doubts held by western scholars to be unserious and unjustified⁷⁶.

The Prophet's letters are also important for the history of international relations in the Muslim world. This aspect of the issue has received much attention from the Moroccan scholar from the University of Al-Jadida, Muḥammad Bu Bush. Containing references to a number of other Arab publications on the problem, his work *'Alāqāt al-dawlīyah fī al-Islām (International Relations in Islam)*⁷⁷ provides an analysis of diplomatic missions from the times of the Prophet. N.M. El Cheikh, whom I have already mentioned and whom one can situate at the intersection of Western and Middle Eastern traditions, shies

⁷³ A little regard for chronology and a mythical thinking typify Arab historiography, sometimes also contemporary one.

⁷⁴ A.I. Kolesnikov, *Dve redakcii pis'ma Muchammeda sasanidskomu šachu Chosrovu II Parvizu*, PPSb 17.80, 1967, p. 74.

⁷⁵ M.H. Haykal, *The Life...*, pp. 374–379 (the first Arabic edition: Cairo 1933).

⁷⁶ N. Salhab, *Fi khutā Muḥammad*, Bayrut 1971, p. 277.

⁷⁷ M. Bu Bush, *'Alāqāt al-dawlīyah fī al-Islām*, Dimashk 2009, pp. 96–104.

away from giving an unambiguous support to one of the two sides of the controversy. To conclude this remarks, the Arab-Muslim world counts the information about those emissaries as referring to real historical events which one has no reason to call into doubt. It is adduced in proof of Muḥammad's foresight and political sagacity and serves as a point of departure for the study of international relations, law, and the history of diplomacy in the Muslim Middle East.

However, Muḥammad Bu Bush departs from the truth when he says that western scholars accept the historicity of both the legations and the letters⁷⁸. While there are some doubts about the authenticity of the former, there is almost absolute agreement about the falsity of the latter. Robert B. Serjeant argues that Muḥammad may have corresponded with Byzantine and Persian officials, if only because of Quraysh's extensive trade with those empires. However, it seems impossible that he could send so provocative letters to Heraclius and Khusraw, as even at the moment of his death he did not exercise control over the whole Arabian Peninsula⁷⁹. M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes also doubts that such events ever took place. According to him, the question of the letters to the monarchs has been distorted by tradition⁸⁰. A similar view is held by W. Montgomery Watt in *Muḥammad at Medina*⁸¹. Many students of Islam do not consider the issue to be worthy of mention and, consequently, it remains altogether omitted from their works. One may argue that orientalist are willing to refer to it only when writing detailed biographies of those who can be assumed to have played any role in this history. Indeed, in itself, it is not regarded as an important aspect of either the history of Byzantium or the life of the Prophet.

4.2. The Prophet's Letter to Emperor Heraclius

There exists an extensive literature on the Arab-Byzantine contacts during the reign of emperor Heraclius (610–641)⁸². The letter which Heraclius sent to

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 100.

⁷⁹ R.B. Serjeant, *Muḥammad's Letters to Foreign Monarchs and Governors*, [in:] *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature. Arabic Literature to the End of Umayyad Period*, eds. A.E.L. Beeston, T.M. Johnstone, R.B. Serjeant, G.R. Smith, Cambridge 1983, p. 141.

⁸⁰ M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Narodziny islamu...*, p. 132.

⁸¹ W. Montgomery Watt, *Muḥammad at Medina*, Cambridge 1956, pp. 345–347 (*Excuse D. Muḥammad's Letters to the Princes*). For M. Hamidullah's comments on the opinions expressed by W. Montgomery Watt see: M. Hamidullah, *Six originaux...*, pp. 84–87.

⁸² In addition to the works I have already mentioned see: W.F. Kaegi, *Heraclius and the Arabs*, GOTR 27, 1982, pp. 109–133; L. Pouzet, *Le ḥadīth d'Héraclius. Une caution by-*

Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd Allāh of Medina, almost the emperor's peer, is believed to concern an interesting aspect of the Byzantine-Arab relations and, as such, is almost always given wide coverage in works devoted to them. The letter was sent right after the relics of the Holy Cross were returned to Jerusalem – regained by Heraclius from the Persians who had brought them out of the Saint City⁸³.

The story appears in a number of classic Arab works, including various religious texts as well as those which, according to western taxonomy, can be assembled under the rubric of historiography⁸⁴. In his *Tafsīr* Al-Ṭabarī gives the following account of the mission to Heraclius on which Muḥammad was to send:

[Abu Sufyān] said: Dihya Ibn Khalifa al-Kalbī presented him with the Prophet's letter: In the name of God, most gracious, most merciful. From Muḥammad, God's Prophet, to Heraclius, the great ruler of Byzantium. Peace be upon him who follows the right path. Next, I summon thee with the appeal of Islam: become a Moslem and thou shalt be safe. God shall give thee thy reward twofold. But if thou decline then thee will sin like all your subjects⁸⁵.

Ibn Shihāb az-Zuhri said: A Christian bishop whom I met at the time of ʿAbd al-Malik Ibn Marwān⁸⁶ told me that he was well-informed about this matter concerning Prophet, Peace be upon Him, and emperor Heraclius. He said: when the Prophet's letter arrived, along with Dihya Ibn Khalifa al-Kalbī, Heraclius took it and placed it between his thighs and his side. Then he wrote to a man in Rome, who spoke Hebrew, describing in detail the whole thing. The Roman answered: Verily, it is the Prophet to whom we are looking forward, there is no doubt about it. Follow his path and believe him.

He summoned Byzantine patriarchs who gathered in a citadel. The gates were closed behind them. He looked at them from his platform as he was afraid of their reaction. I gathered you here for a good cause. I received a letter from this man, calling on me to accept his religion. Verily, by God, he is the Prophet to whom we have been looking forward and whom we find in our books. Then follow him, believe him and we will save ourselves in this world and in the afterlife.

He went on: they were indignant at what he said and turned to leave but the citadel's gates were closed. Heraclius said: Turn them back – and he was afraid of them – and said: O, The Byzantines, I told you what you have just heard to test the strength of your faith in view of what happened. I rejoiced at what I saw. Then they fell to their knees before him. The gates were opened at his order and they left.

zantine à la prophétie de Muḥammad, [in:] *La Syrie de Byzance à l'islam. VII^e–VIII^e siècles*, eds. P. Canivet, J.-P. Rey-Coquais, Damas 1992, pp. 59–66; W.E. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, Cambridge 2000. It comes as a surprise that the last scholar does not refer in any way to the previous research into the letter.

⁸³ M. Gaudetroy-Demombynes, *Narodziny islamu...*, p. 132.

⁸⁴ The version from the collection of ḥadīths *Ṣaḥīḥ* by Al-Bukhārī was discussed by L. Pouzet in the article mentioned above.

⁸⁵ *Al-Akkārūn*.

⁸⁶ A caliph from the Umayyad dynasty. He ruled in the years 685–705.

(...) A scholar reported that after Dihya Ibn Khalifa al-Kalbī came to Heraclius and presented him with a letter from Allāh, Peace be upon Him, the emperor said: Verily, by God, I know that your master is a real prophet and that he is the one to whom we have been looking forward and whom we find in our book, but I am afraid of the Byzantines. If it were not for that, I would follow him. Go to the archbishop⁸⁷ and tell him about your master – he is more powerful in Byzantium than I am and wields greater influence. See what he will tell you.

He said: Dihya came to him and told Heraclius about the letter from God's messenger, Peace be upon Him, and about the message itself. The archbishop said: Yes, verily, your master is a real prophet, we know his character traits and his name is to be found in our books⁸⁸. Then he entered, took off his black robe and put on the white one. After that he took his stick and addressed the Byzantines gathered in the Church, saying: we received the letter from Aḥmad⁸⁹ who calls on us to believe in Allāh. I declare that there is no other deity but One God and that Aḥmad is his servant and prophet.

He said: And they made a lunge at him and beat him to death. When Dihya returned to Heraclius and told him about everything, the emperor said: That is what I told you: I am afraid of them. Archbishop, by God, was stronger than me and wielded greater influence over them than I do.

(...) A man living in Syria for a long time said: When Heraclius wanted to set out from Syria to Constantinople and got word of God's Prophet, Peace be upon Him, he gathered the Byzantines and addressed them in the following way: O, the Byzantines, I have something to tell you. Give some thought to it because it may be good. What do you mean? – they asked. He replied: you should know that this man is a real prophet. He is to be found in our book. We can recognize him by the traits through which he was supposed to distinguish himself. Follow him and we will save ourselves in this world and in the afterlife. They said: Should we come under Arab rule while we are richer and more numerous than they are and our country is greater than theirs.

He replied: Let us then pay him *djizya* every year. Break his bones on my behalf and I will have a rest from fighting against him, giving him this in return. They replied: are we supposed to demean ourselves before the Arabs in return for *kharāj* while we are wealthier and more numerous and our country is wealthier. No, by God, we will never do it!

⁸⁷ There appears here a mysterious word whose meaning is not clear. In some versions it is *Dughāṭir/Daghāṭir/Dughāṭur*, while in others *Ṣughāṭir/Ṣaghāṭir* (with *ṣād* (*s*) or *ḍād* (*d*) at the beginning – in Arabic the letters differ from one another only in the presence, or absence, of the dot). In the edition of which I make use here, there appears the form *Ṣughāṭir*, while in the edition used by El Cheikh (*Byzantium...*, p. 47) there appears *Dughāṭir*. She treats the word as denoting the name of a bishop. M. Hamidullah argues it is the name of an office: *l'évêque "autocrator", ou ḍughāṭur des Arabes (La Lettre...*, pp. 97–98). I decided to translate the phrase *ṣaghāṭir al-uskufas archbishop*.

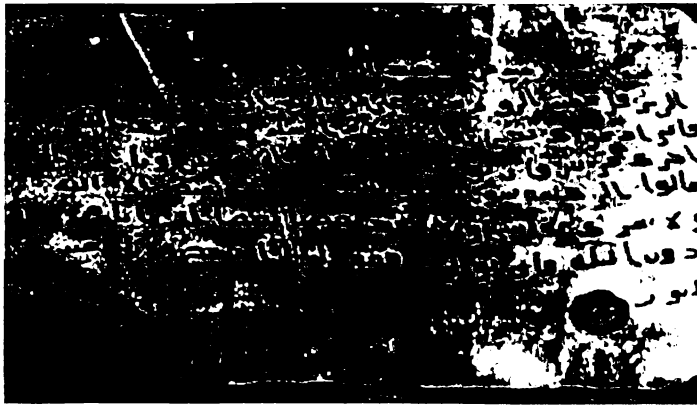
⁸⁸ This may be a reference to the issue of Paraclete, widely discussed in Muslim-Christian disputes. For more on the issue see: W.P. Turek, *Aḥmad-Paraklet-Mani. Spożrzenie na kontrowersyjny werwet 61,6 Koranu*, [in:] *Spotkania Arabistyczne III*, ed. F. Górska, Kraków 2000, pp. 11–26. It can also be indicated by the introduction in the Prophet's letter to Heraclius.

⁸⁹ Prophet Muḥammad sometimes goes by the name Aḥmad.

He said: Let us appease him by giving him the lands of Syria and he will leave me in possession of Ash-Shām⁹⁰ (...) To this they answered: Are we supposed to give him the lands of Syria that are the hub of Ash-Shām? We will never do this!

When thy refused to accept his proposal, he said: Now you see that you have won by forbidding him to cross into your territory. Then he mounted his mule and went away in the direction of the road leading to Ash-Shām. After that he said: Peace be upon the Syrian land, farewell! And he left for Constantinople.

Al-Ṭabarī's work does not contain the full text of the letter. His version is in many respects inaccurate. Below, I quote what appears to be the fullest version of this monument. Here is an alleged original of Muḥammad's letter to Heraclius⁹¹:



Transcription⁹²:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم من محمد عبد الله ورسوله
الى هرقل عظيم الروم وسلام على من اتبع الهدى اما بعد
فاني ادعوك بدعاية الاسلام اسلم تسلم اسلم يؤتك الله
أجر ك مرتين فإن توليت فعليك إثم اليريسين ويا أهل الكتاب
تعالوا إلى كلمة سواء بيننا وبينكم ألا نعبد إلا الله
ولا نشرك به شيئا ولا يتخذ بعضنا بعضا أربابا من
دون الله فإن تولوا فقولوا اشهدوا بأنا مسلمون

⁹⁰ In the early Islam the term *Ash-Shām* meant the so-called Great Syria. It was also used to denote the old Damascus. The fragment referring to a division *Ash-Shām*/Syria is rather unclear.

⁹¹ http://t1.hespress.com/files/fromprophetetocesar_851343288.jpg.

⁹² Transcription according to M. Hamidullah (*La lettre...*, p. 98), without taking into account vocal and punctuation signs that are the author's interference. The division of particular lines is in conformity with the manuscript.

[Beneath, seal with inscription:]

Translation:

In the name of God Gracious and Merciful. From Muḥammad, God's servant and Prophet,

to Heraclius, Byzantium's great ruler. Peace be upon him who follows the right path.

Next, I summon thee with the appeal of Islam: become a Moslem and thou shalt be safe.

God shall give thee thy reward twofold. But if thou decline then thee will sin like all your subjects.

'O People of the Book!

Come to common

terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allāh;

that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than Allāh.

If then they turn back, say ye: 'Bear witness that we [at least] are Muslims [bowing to Allāh's Will]'.⁹³

[Beneath seal with inscription:]

God

Prophet

Muḥammad

In his *History*, Al-Ya 'kūbī'⁹⁴ adds Heraclius' response to the letter from the Muslim Prophet:

To Aḥmad, God's prophet, Peace be upon Him, whom Jesus prophesied, from the emperor, the king of Byzantium. Your messenger brought me Your letter. Verily, I bear witness that you are God's prophet whom we find in the Gospel. Jesus, Mary's son, foretold your coming. I called on the Byzantines to believe in You, but they refused. It would have been better for them to believe me. I want to stand by you, to serve you and to wash your feet.⁹⁵

As mentioned above, many western scholars treat the episode as nothing but a legend. However, Arabists are prepared to admit that such a mission may have taken place. For the Byzantinist, Walter Kaegi, this, too, is a possibility that cannot be ruled out – but, as he says, such a mission, when sent, would have been completely ignored by the Byzantines, leaving Muḥammad's emissary with no chance of being received at the imperial court⁹⁵. Ahatanhel E. Krymsky ends his discussion of the topic with the following conclusion: *It goes without*

⁹³ Aḥmad Ibn Abī Ya 'kūb Al-Ya 'kūbī (died in 897), a geographer and historian, his most known work is *Kitāb al-buldān* (*Book of countries*). M.Q. Z a m a n, *Al-Ya 'kūbī* [in:] *El*, vol. XI, pp. 257–258; J. B i e l a w s k i, *Klasyczna literatura arabska*, Warszawa 1995, pp. 187–188.

⁹⁴ Ya 'kūbī, p. 399 (ed. A b d a l - A m i r M u h n a).

⁹⁵ W.F. K a e g i, *Heraclius...*, p. 236.

saying that *Heraclius disregarded Dihya Ibn Khalifa*⁹⁶. From this it follows that Krymskiy does not entirely reject the possibility of the emperor receiving the letter. Unambiguous about the whole story is Leone Caetani who calls it apocryphal and legendary⁹⁷. Be that as it may, for western scholars the problem lies mainly in the letter itself. In the nineteenth century, doubts about its authenticity were raised by Ignaz Goldziher, and then by Leone Caetani and Frants Buhl, of which M. Hamidullah eagerly informs us – himself convinced of its veracity⁹⁸. He also gives a detailed account of the history of the manuscript which the emperor received⁹⁹. In *Six originaux des lettres du Prophète*, he refers to what he claims is the opinion of anonymous experts from the British Museum who subjected the letter to chemical analysis and examined it using ultraviolet rays. This, says Hamidullah, enabled them to prove that it originated in the times of the Prophet. Their findings were then confirmed by dr. Reed from the University of Leeds. However, it comes as a surprise that this information is not included in the text the author published in 1995 in “Arabica”. After all, it could dispel the doubts held by western scholars. In 1997, King Hussein of Jordan announced on television that he was in possession of the document¹⁰⁰. N.M. El Cheikh, without expressing his own opinion on the subject, provides information that the authenticity of the letter is questioned by the Iraqi scholar, Suhayla al-Jabburi¹⁰¹.

4.3. The Letter to Al-Mukawķis

l-Mukawķis¹⁰² (also Maqawqas) is a name which Arab sources give to one of the Coptic Patriarchs of Alexandria. The origin of the name is not quite clear. analysis is to be found in a monograph by Alfred J. Buttler on the conquest of Egypt¹⁰³. This author indicates a number of Arabic sources (Al-Balādhurī – the ninth century, Al-Ṭabarī, Eutychius – the ninth/tenth century, Severus of Al-Ashmūneyn – the tenth century, Ibn al-Athīr – twelfth century, Yākūt al-Ḥamawī – the twelfth/thirteenth century, Abū Ṣāliḥ – thirteenth century, Ibn

⁹⁶ A.E. Krymskiy, *Istoriya musul'manstva*, Moskva 2003, p. 125.

⁹⁷ L. Caetani, *Annali...*, p. 731.

⁹⁸ M. Hamidullah, *La lettre...*, p. 99.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 107–110.

¹⁰⁰ See: N.M. El Cheikh, *Muhammad and Heraclius...*, p. 11, footnote. 23.

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰² The analysis of the letter in: M. Hamidullah, *Six originaux...*, pp. 95–107.

¹⁰³ A.J. Buttler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the Last Thirty Years of Roman Dominion*, Oxford 1902, *Appendix C. On the Identity of 'Al-Mukawķas'*.

Khaldūn – fourteenth century), where this figure appears. Of course, Al-Muḳawḳis also appears in all of the works devoted to the life of the Prophet I have mentioned here. Here is the alleged original of the Prophet's letter to Al-Muḳawḳis¹⁰⁴:

The alleged original of Muḥammad's letter to Al-Muḳawḳis¹⁰⁵



Transcription¹⁰⁶:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم. من محمد عبد الله ور
سوله إلى المقوقس عظيم القبط وسلام على
من اتبع الهدى أما بعد فإني أد
عوك بدعاية الإسلام فاسلم
تسلم يؤتلك الله أجرك مرتين
فان توليت فعليك اثم القبط
يا أهل الكتاب تعالوا إلى كلمة

¹⁰⁴ <http://werzit.com/intel/history/islam/Moqoqas.jpg>. The manuscript is located at the Topkapı Museum in Istanbul: http://iosminaret.org/vol-2/issue1/topkapi_museum.php.

¹⁰⁵ Source: <http://werzit.com/intel/history/islam/Moqoqas.jpg> [dostęp z 4.02.2014]. The manuscript is located at the Topkapı Museum in Istanbul: http://iosminaret.org/vol-2/issue1/topkapi_museum.php [access 4.02.2014].

¹⁰⁶ According to the edition: F.-A. Belin, *Lettre à M. Reinaud, membre de l'Institut sur un document arabe relatif à Mahomet*, JA 4, 1854, pp. 488–489.

سواء بيننا وبينكم الا نعيد إلا الله
ولا نشرك به شيئا ولا يتخذ بعضنا
بعضا أربابا من دون الله فإن
تولوا فقولوا أشهدوا بأننا مسلمون

[Beneath seal with inscription:]

الله
رسول
محمد

Translation:

In the name of God the Gracious, the Merciful. From Muḥammad the Apostle of of God and His Prophet

to Al-Muḥawḳis, the chief of the Copts. Peace be upon him who follows the guidance.

Next, I summon thee with the appeal of Islam:

become a Moslem. If you become Muslim God shall give thee thy reward twofold.

But if thou decline then on thee is the guilt of the Copts.

'O People of the Book!

come to common

terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allāh;

that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not, from among

ourselves, lords and patrons other than Allāh'. If then

they turn back, say ye: 'Bear witness that we [at least] are Muslims [bowing to Allāh's Will]':

[Below, seal with inscription:]

God

Prophet

Muḥammad

To Kaj Öhrnberg we owe a summary of the hitherto conducted research into the subject. As Öhrnberg writes, nowadays it is widely held that the source mentions a Melchite patriarch of Alexandria, Cyrus. However, there is no doubt that other persons are also referred to by this name in Arab texts which often confuse historical facts with legends. That the person in question should be identified as Cyrus is corroborated by a comparison between Arab, Byzantine and Coptic sources¹⁰⁷. In the last category one can include, for example, the chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu. Cyrus, transferred to Egypt by Heraclius, arrived there

¹⁰⁷ See, among others: John of Nikiu, *indices*; J. Pałucki, *Jan z Nicius*, [in:] *Encyklopedia Katolicka*, vol. VII, Lublin 1997, col. 926.

in 631. (One should pay attention to the divergences in dating). Before his stay in Egypt, he had served as Bishop of Phasis (Poti). The term Al-Muḳawḳis is likely to be connected with Caucasus. Cyrus' successor, Benjamin, was also called Al-Muḳawḳis (or simply Muḳawḳis) by Arab chroniclers. The period in which the latter held his office is described in the sources as *ten years during which Heraclius and Al-Muḳawḳis ruled Egypt*. In a variety of other texts, Al-Muḳawḳis is presented as *Viceroy of Egypt*, whom he was to be in the reign of Heraclius¹⁰⁸. Thus, the term (leaving aside its unclear etymology) should be regarded as having denoted the "ruler of Egypt" in general. This view finds confirmation in dictionaries of the classical Arabic.

For the account of Ḥāṭib's visit to the patriarch of Alexandria I rely on *Futūḥ Miṣr* by Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam:

Ḥāṭib set out with the Prophet's letter and when he got to Alexandria he found Muḳawḳis sitting on a platform. He swam up to him on sea, and when he was close to him he indicated the letter from God's Prophet which he was holding with two fingers. When Muḳawḳis spotted Ḥāṭib, he ordered him to give him the letter. He told him to get closer and when he read the letter he said: What, if he is a prophet, prevented him from summoning me and presenting me with his message? To this Ḥāṭib replied: and what prevented Jesus, Mary's son, from telling those who rejected him not to do it? He fell silent for an hour and then he repeated his question. Ḥāṭib gave the same answer and fell silent. Ḥāṭib said: there was a man before you who thought that he was the Greatest Lord and God wrought vengeance on him and you should take revenge for him. Think of others not of yourself. Verily, the earthly world is yours and you will lose it only to what is better, that is, to Islam. Nothing campers to Islam. Moses' prophecy about Jesus is like Jesus' prophecy about Muḥammad, and we summon you to Qur'ān just like you summon Torah's believers to the Gospel. We are not trying to make you turn away from Messiah's religion, we are guiding you towards it. Then he read the following letter: In the name of God, the Gracious, the Merciful. From the Apostle of Allāh to the Muḳawḳis, chief of the Copts. Peace be upon him who follows the guidance. Next, I summon thee with the appeal of Islam: become a Moslem and thou shalt be safe. God shall give thee thy reward twofold. But if thou decline then on thee is the guilt of the Copts. 'O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allāh; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than Allāh'. If then they turn back, say ye: 'Bear witness that we [at least] are Muslims [bowing to Allāh's Will]'. When he read it he put it into a casket made of ivory and sealed it.

(...) At night Al-Muḳawḳis sent for Ḥāṭib, and the interpreter was the only person he was with, and he said: Tell me about things I am going to ask you about. I know that your master selected you, sending you here. He said: I will answer truthfully to any of

¹⁰⁸ A.J. Butler, *The Arab Conquest...*, p. 517.

your questions. He asked: What does Muḥammad call on us to do? He said: He wants you to worship one God only, associating nothing with Him, rejecting everything except Him. He also calls on you to pray. He asked: How many times do you pray? He replied: Five times during the day and night, we fast in Ramadan and make pilgrimages to God's House. He instructs us to respect treaties and to abstain from eating carrion and blood. He asked: Who follows him? He answered: Young people from his tribe and others. He asked: Are his people persecuted? He answered: Yes. Describe him to me – he asked. He described as well as he could. There are some things left which you have failed to take into account – he said. There is red in his eyes, tell me what distinguishes him – there is a sign of prophecy between his shoulder bones, he rides a mule, wears a coat and lives on fruit and crumbs. And he does not mind whether something concerns his cousin or uncle. Yes, these are his traits – he answered. Al-Muḥawḳis said to this: I knew that one more prophet was about to appear, but I thought he would appear in Syria. This is where all prophets before him came from. It turns out that he appeared among the Arabs, in the land of misery and toil. However, the Copts will not listen to me to follow him and I do not want them to know about our conversation. Word will spread about him in the country and his men will get to us to reveal what we were talking about. And I will not say a word to the Copts. Go back to your master. (...) Then he summoned a writer fluent in Arabic and the latter wrote: From Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd Allāh to Al-Muḥawḳis, the Copts' leader. Peace! Next, I read Your letter and understood its purpose, Your message. I recognized You as the prophet, although I thought he would appear in Syria. I hosted generously your messenger and I send you two girls who are respected among the Copts, a robe and a mule which you can ride. Peace be upon you.¹⁰⁹

Muḥammad's concubine, Mary the Copt, was to be one of those girls¹¹⁰. The Prophet's letter to Al-Muḥawḳis, the first in the Corpus¹¹¹ has been considered a forgery ever since it was discovered by western scholars¹¹². This papyrus manuscript was found by the French Egyptologist, Étienne Barthélemy, in 1852 in a monastery in Akhmim. In 1854, François-Alphonse Belin published its critical edition. As Theodor Nöldeke remarks, "chancellery style" was at that time much less cufic in character. The seals used as a substitute for signature were made of clay. Colourful seals were not used. What is more, the letter of this kind, apart from the name of the sender, should also contain the name of the person

¹⁰⁹ Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, vol. I, pp. 65–67.

¹¹⁰ M. Gaudetroy-Demombynes, *Narodziny islamu...*, pp. 181–183; F. Buhl, *Māriya*, [in:] *EI*, vol. VI, p. 575.

¹¹¹ M. Hamidullah, *Six originaux...*, p. 99.

¹¹² In the first edition of his *Geschichte des Qurāns* (Göttingen 1860, p. 140) Th. Nöldeke leaned toward the view that the document is authentic. However, in the reprint of the work from 1909 he clearly rejects his previous opinion. See: T. Nöldeke, F. Schwally, *Geschichte des Qurāns...*, p. 190, footnote. 3. M. Hamidullah says that this change was introduced by the editor of the second edition of the book, F. Schwally (p. 101).

entrusted with the task of delivering it¹¹³. The way in which Hamidullah tries to refute these arguments in his own edition of the letter is rather unconvincing.

Much speaks in favour of the interpretation that Muḥammad's missions to the rulers of the neighbouring countries had no basis in reality. At the same time, it seems to be designed to legitimate Muḥammad's prophecy and the whole *umma* by Christianity¹¹⁴. Such a phenomenon, referred to as a backward projection or creative retrospective, is often the case in both historical and pseudohistorical literature. And it is not something to be considered typical of Arab-Muslim culture. The Mexican scholar, E. Florescano, comments on this principle in the following way:

Every time a social movement wins, imposing its rule on the society, it becomes a measure of history. It rules over the present, defines the future, and arranges the past. It dictates what, and why, deserves to be remembered. (...) The selective and pragmatic reconstruction of the past is as old as the human history itself. It serves as a way of identification, explains the origins of [various phenomena], legitimizes the established order, gives meaning to the life of the nations and individuals, justifies the right of one group to rule over the other, creates reality, and promotes projects to be realized in the near future.¹¹⁵

There is no doubt that this way of using history played a specific role in Christian-Muslim disputations that took place in the Middle East in the period under consideration¹¹⁶.

Finally, worthy of note is some inconsistency with which the earliest Arab sources (or considered as such) treat the Byzantines. The Qur'anic contexts analyzed above are at odds with a part of the Prophet's Tradition, regarded as having been brought into being during his lifetime, (although it was written/recorded two centuries later). In Al-Bukhārī's collection of ḥadīths¹¹⁷, in the *Book of Jihad* (*Kitāb al-jihād*), there is a short chapter entitled *What was said about the fight with the Byzantines* (*Ma kāla fi kitāb Al-Rūm*). It concerns itself with only one ḥadīth, narrated by the Prophet's known companion (*saḥābiyya*) Umm Ḥaram

¹¹³ T. Nöldcke, F. Schwally, *Geschichte des Qurāns...*, p. 190.

¹¹⁴ N.M. El Cheikh, *Muḥammad and Heraclius...*, p. 21; eadem, *Byzantium...*, p. 54. I analyse a similar phenomenon in reference to an alleged Christian in my *Quiss Ibn Sā'ida al-Iyādi...*, *passim*.

¹¹⁵ E. Florescano, *Od historii – pomnika władzy do historii wyjaśniającej*, [in:] *Poco nam historia?*, transl. M. Mróz, Warszawa 1985, p. 71. See also: J. Szacki, *Tradycja*, Warszawa 1971, pp. 174–175.

¹¹⁶ R.B. Serjeant, *Muḥammad's Letters...*, p. 142.

¹¹⁷ Bukhārī, vol. III, pp. 1069–1070, ḥadīth 2766 (ed. Damascus 1993).

Bint Milhān (died around 647/648)¹¹⁸. As she was to bring Islam to Cyprus, she is known as *Shahīdat al-Bahr*, that is, "Martyr of the Sea". Her grave is believed to be found in Larnaca in tekke Hala Sultan¹¹⁹. According to Al-Bukhārī, Umm Haram heard the Prophet say: *The first warriors of my umma who will conquer the city will be forgiven of all their sins.*

Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad* carries a similarly negative connotation. It includes the remark that Antichrist (*Ad-Dajjāl* – whose advent is to be considered as a sign of the end of the world) will come only after the Byzantines have been defeated¹²⁰. However, it seems that these traditional accounts the authenticity of which has long been a topic of concern to a great number of scholars simply reflect the way in which Byzantium was viewed by Muslims later on. This tradition must have emerged when the latter had already stopped regarding the Byzantines as their potential allies and begun to treat them as their greatest enemies. Of course, it remains to answer the question of whether the events dealt with in this contribution actually took place. As it seems, Muslims scholars will differ considerably from their western colleagues in answering the question. For them, the events under discussion form part of a sacred history, and *sacrum* clearly prevents them from accepting the facts.



¹¹⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghābah*, vol. VII, pp. 317–318 (biographical entry 7403).

¹¹⁹ N. Papalexandrou, *Hala Sultan Tekke, Cyprus: An Elusive Landscape of Sacredness in a Liminal Context*, JMGS 26.2, 2008, pp. 251–281.

¹²⁰ Ibn Ḥanbal, vol. I, p. 177, ḥadīth 1543 (ed. Bayrut 1993).

5. The Arabs and Islam in the Eyes of the Byzantines

5.1. The Arabs in Byzantine Eyes

In the opinion of Bert de Vries, from the Byzantine point of view the Arabs were *as mysterious and invisible as their desert (...) like shadowy figures seen through a sand storm*¹. This kind of view, although suggestive, was not true, at least for the people of Syria, Palestine and Egypt, who – which has been demonstrated elsewhere in this book – had had multidimensional relations with Arab tribes. For the inhabitants of Constantinople, or to be more precise – for the European part of the empire, and particularly for their intellectual circles, who tended to trust ancient writers rather than contemporary accounts – the situation could look different.

The Byzantines inherited from their Greek and Roman ancestors a variety of stereotypes and prejudices regarding Arabs/Saracens/Ishmaelites. Their prototype can be found as far back as in the famous verse of *Genesis*, in which Ishmael is described as *a wild man*². Referring to the Old Testament, Joseph Flavius added his own remarks, which reinforced the negative opinion about Arabs who – according to him – were unfaithful and ungodly, greedy and treacherous³. Arab women would be famous for making poisons⁴.

An interesting example of one of the most stereotypical perceptions of the Arabs can be found in Aesop's fables. One of them is a story of Hermes'

¹ B. de Vries, *On the Way to Bosra: Arab Settlement in South Syria Before Islam – the Evidence from Written Sources*, [in:] *Hereux qui comme Ulysse a fait un beau voyage: Movements of People in Time and Space*, eds. N. Naguib, B. de Vries, Bergen 2010, p. 73.

² Gen, 16, 12.

³ Joseph Flavius, XV, 5, 3 (that accusation would fall in Herod's speech to his army).

⁴ Joseph Flavius, XVII, 4, 1.

carriage in which he used to transport bad habits and distribute them among peoples. When the carriage had a crash in Arabia, the local people stole its content, as they believed that it was of great value. So they became false and treacherous more than any other nation – no truth could pass through their mouths⁵. The fact that it was the god of merchants and thieves who fell their victim adds extra flavour to the story. Numerous sources in which the Arabs were described as thieves and robbers go perfectly well with this fable⁶. Their neighbours perceived them as militant and inveterate looters⁷. *It is a dangerous "ethnos"* – concluded Ammianus Marcellinus⁸. Telling of an attack of some unidentified barbarians on the hermits in Rouba, Cyril of Scythopolis described them as *Saracen by nature*⁹. They were seen as enemies from whom the eastern provinces had to be defended¹⁰. Attention was paid to other negative features of their nature. Theophylact Simocatta assessed them shortly as incredible and disloyal¹¹. De Vries suggests that the negative stereotype may have resulted from the fact that the Romans failed to subordinate the people of Arabian Peninsula¹².

For many Byzantine writers their neighbours from the Peninsula were nothing but barbarians. It was caused by the fact that the information about them reached the empire at the peak of dramatic events, usually raids. Eusebius of Caesarea noticed that in the times of persecution of Christians in the empire, the *barbaric Saracens* captured some of those who had sought refuge in the desert and killed many others¹³.

The belief that the Saracens were Skenites, nomads dwelling in tents, persisted for a long time¹⁴. Such description can be found in Marcellinus, who

⁵ Aesop, *Fables*, 112. E. Lauzi, *Bizantini versus Saraceni. Un'accusa d'idolatria*, Ae 88.2, 2014, p. 287.

⁶ Joseph Flavius, XV, 10, 1; Pliny, VI, 26; Ammianus Marcellinus, XIV, 4, 3.

⁷ Ammianus Marcellinus, XIV, 4, 3.

⁸ Ammianus Marcellinus, XIV, 4, 7.

⁹ Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Sabae*, 14. Further references to Cyril in this chapter after the edition by E. Schwartz.

¹⁰ B. de Vries, *On the Way to Bosra...*, p. 73; D.D. Grafton, "The Arabs" in *the Ecclesiastical Historians of the 4th/5th Centuries: Effects on Contemporary Christian-Muslim Relations*, HTS 64.1, 2008, p. 178.

¹¹ Theophylact Simocatta, III, 17, 7.

¹² B. de Vries, *On the Way to Bosra...*, p. 81.

¹³ Eusebius of Caesarea, *HE*, VI, 42; D.D. Grafton, "The Arabs...", p. 179.

¹⁴ *Skenites whom we now call Saracens* – Ammianus Marcellinus, XXII, 15, 2. See also: Ammianus Marcellinus, XXIII, 6, 13; Evagrius Scholasticus, III, 2; III, 36 (*barbaric Skenites*).

maintained that even when camping, they remained in motion all the time. They had no permanent homes, nor did they stay in the same place for long. The chronicler said with emphasis that an Arab wife married her husband at one place, bore his children at another, and kept raising them somewhere else still¹⁵. It was emphasised that Saracens neither tilled the soil nor planted trees and they did not know corn or wine¹⁶. Marcellinus tried to convince his readers that he had personally learned about it¹⁷. If we were to believe Greek or Roman writers, the Arabs would feed on wild birds and animals, milk, and herbs. The description of the fertile land of *Arabia Felix*, known from the narrations by Philostorgius, changed that picture considerably¹⁸. The Greek narrative sources were generally overlooking the Arab role in the trade between Byzantium and India.

Relatively much attention was paid to the religion of the people of the Peninsula. Despite that it would be difficult to reconstruct the Arab pantheon based on the testimonies of the ancient and Byzantine writers¹⁹. The information delivered is fragmentary, most often a curiosity rather than a serious lecture. In the *Life of St. Hilarion*, Jerome described a meeting of an ascetic from Gaza with a few Saracens during their festivities devoted to Lucifer – the Morning Star²⁰. They were also known to worship the moon²¹. Philostorgius delivered information about the cult of the Sun and Moon among the Himyarite tribe in the south of the Peninsula²². Nonnosus, a sixth century writer, heard of a holiday devoted to a god, during which the Arabs were coming to some place twice a year: in the Spring for one month and after the summer solstice – for another two²³. At that time all inter-tribal conflicts were suspended²⁴. It is possible that the same holiday was seen by Anonymous of Piacenza, on his way to the Holy Land in the sixth century²⁵. John of Damascus, who lived in the early eighth cen-

¹⁵ Ammianus Marcellinus, XIV, 4, 3–5.

¹⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus, XIV, 4, 3.

¹⁷ Ammianus Marcellinus, XIV, 4, 6.

¹⁸ Philostorgius, III, 11.

¹⁹ E. Lauzi, *Bizantini versus Saraceni...*, pp. 295–300. Some information has been preserved by Arab historians (Al-Kalbī, Al-Ṭabarī).

²⁰ Jerome, *Vita Hilarionis*, 25, col. 41; Nilus, III, 12, 13–18; E. Lauzi, *Bizantini versus Saraceni...*, p. 294.

²¹ Ammianus Marcellinus (XXII, 3, 2) writes about sacrifices to Luna offered by Julian during his expedition against the Persians. E. Lauzi, *Bizantini versus Saraceni...*, p. 294.

²² Philostorgius, III, 4, 4a. According to this author the Arab worshipped *demons* as well by erecting monuments following local tradition.

²³ Nonnosus, pp. 4–7. Nonnosus wrote about various Saracens – from Phoinikon, behind the Taurus Mountains.

²⁴ Nonnosus, pp. 4–7.

²⁵ Anonymous Piacentinus, 38.

tury, maintained that the Arabs worshipped a stone which was in fact the head of Aphrodite *Habar*²⁶. His record seems to be a blend of information about the role of Al-Ka'ba in beliefs of the inhabitants of the Peninsula and about the pre-Muslim cult of the goddess Al-Lāt. John's information was later repeated by other authors as well.

What evoked particularly morbid fascination were the alleged bloody sacrifices, which included also human offerings, described by some authors, including Pseudo-Zachariah, Nilus of Sinai, Procopius, and Evagrius²⁷. According to Nilus, the people of the Arabian deserts did not worship any god at all, only the Morning Star to which they made bloody offerings²⁸. He described in detail the ceremony of sacrificing a white camel²⁹. Evagrius, writing about the baptised Lakhmid, Al-Nu'umān, informed that prior to his conversion he had himself made offerings of humans³⁰.

Some of the authors noted the details of the Arab appearance. Pliny described their headgear, haircut and the habit of having beards³¹. Later authors pointed out their modest and mostly incomplete clothes. Ammianus Marcellinus maintained that they wore only a coloured cloak that would reach down to their loins³². Patriarch Sophronius was startled and slightly disgusted by 'Umar's simplicity of both robes and manners³³.

Greek, Roman and Byzantine writers also paid attention to the everyday life of Arabs and emphasised their passion for carnal pleasures. Marcellinus maintained that Arab men would marry their wives for a limited time only and after that the women were free to leave their husbands³⁴. Sozomen emphasised that

²⁶ John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI), 78–94. See: W. Żelazny, *Patrystyczne świadectwa prób dialogu między chrześcijanami a islamem*, [in:] *Wczesne chrześcijaństwo a religie*, eds. I.S. Ledwoń, M. Szram, Lublin 2012, p. 309; E. Lauzi, *Byzantini versus Sarceni*....., pp. 300–305. Accusations of idolatry appeared also in other Byzantine texts, not cited here because they were written much later.

²⁷ Pseudo-Zachariah, VIII, 5; Nilus, III, 12, 13–13, 11; Procopius, *De bellis*, II, 28, 12–13; *Chronicle of Seert*, vol. II/I, 18, p. 133; Evagrius Scholasticus, VI, 22.

²⁸ Nilus, III, 12, 13–18.

²⁹ Nilus, III, 12, 24–13, 11.

³⁰ Evagrius Scholasticus, VI, 22. There is no doubt that the offerings were made to "Aphrodite". Having been baptised, Al-Nu'umān had her gold statue melted down and gave the gold away to the poor.

³¹ Pliny, VI, 28.

³² Ammianus Marcellinus, XIV, 4, 3.

³³ Theophanes, AM 6127, p. 339; Michael the Syrian, XI, 7, vol. II, pp. 425–426 (Michael praised 'Umar's modesty); Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando*, 19; K. Kościelniak, *Grecy i Arabowie. Historia Kościoła melkickiego (katolickiego) na ziemiach zdobytych przez muzułmanów (634–1516)*, Kraków 2004, p. 60.

³⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, XIV, 4, 4.

the Arabs wanted to have children – it was important to them, like to most barbarians³⁵. Herodotus and Strabo, and subsequently Sozomen as well, recorded the ancient practice of circumcision, popular among the people of the Peninsula³⁶. The latter saw the coincidence of that practice and of other customs (prohibition to eat pork, similar rituals) with the laws of the Jews³⁷. That observation, combined with the knowledge of the Arab tribes, originating from Ishmael, led him to interesting conclusions. He believed that the Saracens had distorted the teachings of their forefather, Abraham, which had not been written down until the times of Moses, and began borrowing traditions from their neighbours³⁸. Therefore the Arabs would have had adopted Judaism, which they in turn abandoned in favour of polytheism. Some of them, however, following their subsequent relations with Jews returned to the old laws³⁹. As we have stated in the chapter devoted to the Arab neighbours of Byzantium, Judaism had indeed been present in the Arabian Peninsula before Islam, also among the Arabs, which Sozomen rightly noted. He was also correct when he wrote about acceptance of Christianity by some of the people of the Peninsula, as a result of meeting priests and monks from the neighbouring deserts⁴⁰. Greg Fisher believes that the opinion of Sozomen, and of other Byzantine writers who connected Arabs with Ishmaelites and derived their origin from Abraham, was in fact depreciative, as thus their false religion was presented as related to *Jewish machinations*⁴¹. The whole issue does not seem as simple, though, because, as descendants of Abraham, the Arabs were not only related to Jews, but to Christians as well.

The question which attracted particular attention was the skill of Arabs as warriors. David D. Grafton has remarked that the Saracens were known to Byzantine historians of the fourth and fifth century for their warlike ability and polytheist beliefs⁴². *I am barbarian and soldier*, Arethas, a Ghassānid, would say to Justinian I⁴³. That utterance, later included in the writings of Michael the Syrian, perfectly conveys Byzantine views on their Arabic neighbours.

³⁵ Sozomen, VI, 38.

³⁶ Sozomen, VI, 38, 11; Philostorgius, III, 4. Herodotus wrote about it with regard to Egyptians (II, 37, 2), Phoenitians and Syrians (II 104, 3–4). Strabo believed that Jews were descendants of Egyptians (XVI, 2, 34; XVII, 2, 5).

³⁷ Sozomen, VI, 38.

³⁸ Sozomen, VI, 38.

³⁹ Sozomen, VI, 38.

⁴⁰ Sozomen, VI, 38. He gave the example of Zokomos and his tribe.

⁴¹ G. Fisher, *Between Empires. Arabs, Romans and Sasanians in Late Antiquity*, Oxford 2011, pp. 166–167.

⁴² D.D. Grafton, *"The Arabs"...*, p. 183.

⁴³ Michael the Syrian, IX, 29, p. 247 (also about eating of camel meat).

Zosimus, too, described them as excellent warriors and fantastic horsemen⁴⁴. Two centuries later, a similar opinion was expressed by Evagrius⁴⁵. Ammianus Marcellinus compared the Arabs to hawks, stalking their prey and attacking like flash of lightning⁴⁶. Arab cavalry was particularly highly valued, thanks to its speed, owed to its horses and camels⁴⁷. According to Joshua the Stylite, it chased Roman troops after their unsuccessful clash with the Persians at Tell Beshmai⁴⁸. As we have remarked somewhere else in this volume, the Tanūkhids of Queen Mavia (Māwiyya) displayed their excellent skills during the struggle against Goths and in defence of Constantinople after the defeat in the battle of Adrianople (378)⁴⁹. Emperor Valens took advantage of their military skills in the campaign against the *Scythians*, i.e. Goths, who proved absolutely helpless when facing Saracen horses and spears. Although they attempted to use a trick, it did not help much and they were slain by the Saracen troops⁵⁰. The fear among the Goths was so great that they preferred to surrender to the Huns on the northern bank of the Danube rather than to go on fighting, concluded Zosimus, perhaps somewhat exaggerating⁵¹.

But the Arabs themselves proved helpless when faced with regular Roman army⁵². Their warfare style was such – according to Evagrius – that only Saracens could defeat other Saracens. Emperor Maurice found himself in an uncomfortable situation when his ally, Al-Mundhir, refused to set off across the Euphrates to fight the Arabs in Persian service⁵³.

Although stereotypical and unfavourable opinions about the Arabs were dominant among the Byzantines, there were exceptions as well. Cyril of Scythopolis, while writing about making a camp by Christianised Arabs, described some of the works they had done, including building a cistern, a bakery, cells for monks and a church or chapel⁵⁴. Evidently, he did perceive them as more than just

⁴⁴ Zosimus, IV, 22, 1–3.

⁴⁵ Evagrius Scholasticus, V, 20.

⁴⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus, XIV, 4, 1. Unfortunately the book about the reign of Marcus Aurelius, with more space devoted to Saracens has not been preserved.

⁴⁷ Ammianus Marcellinus, XIV, 4, 3.

⁴⁸ Joshua the Stylite, 51 (transl. A. Luther; further references according to this edition).

⁴⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus, XXXI, 16, 5–7; Socrates, V, 1; Sozomen, VII, 1–2; Theodore Lector, 219, p. 75; D.D. Grafton, *“The Arabs”*..., pp. 184, 186.

⁵⁰ Zosimus, IV, 22, 1–3.

⁵¹ Zosimus, IV, 22, 3.

⁵² Zosimus, III, 27, 1 (Arab allies of the Persians would run away along with them upon seeing the Romans).

⁵³ Evagrius Scholasticus, V, 20.

⁵⁴ Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Euthymii*, 15.

savage barbarians. Theodoret of Cyrus⁵⁵ also had a good opinion about Arabs, however only about those that have become Christians. One of them, named Abbas, led an ascetic life under the guidance of a certain Maronas⁵⁶. Such an attitude should not be surprising: if the Arabs were Ishmael's descendants, they should be treated like brothers by Christians.

It is notable that we hear more positive opinions about the Arabs from the individuals who had direct contact with them, rather than from those who knew them only from stories or accounts. This can be clearly seen in the works of Cyril of Scythopolis, in particular in his *Lives of the Monks of Palestine*. In the times of persecution of Christians in Persia, the shah ordered Aspebetus, the *phylarchos* of "Persian Arabs" to guard borders and prevent Christians from fleeing to Roman lands. The latter not only failed to obey the shah's orders, but, filled with compassion, helped Christians instead⁵⁷. Even more curiously, at the time he himself was still a pagan. Only later, forced to escape to the Romans, he became Christian⁵⁸. The Arabs could be grateful, too – four Saracens rescued in the desert by St. Sabbas repaid him by bringing him bread, cheese, and dates⁵⁹. Maris, the uncle of Arab sheikh, Terebon, joined the monks and devoted his estate to the welfare of a monastery⁶⁰. Arab phylarchs, allied with Byzantium, used to warn monks and hermits of the dangers from their pro-Persian cousins⁶¹. Many were coming to listen to the advice of holy men or ask for healing⁶². St. Simon enjoyed particularly great fame among them⁶³.

The positive opinion about Saracens, expressed by monks, resulted from the fact that their relations with the nomads were complex. Ulf Scharrer defined

⁵⁵ Theodoret, *De natura*, col. 949; *HR*, VI, 4 (they would boast of being descendants of Ishmael).

⁵⁶ Theodoret, *HR*, IV, 12.

⁵⁷ Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Euthymii*, 10.

⁵⁸ Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Euthymii*, 10. Euthymius, who had healed Aspebet's son, contributed to his conversion. Aspebet's son, under his Christian name of Peter, became the first bishop of the Arabs and took part in the Council of Ephesus. See: Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Euthymi*, 15; *PRLE* II, pp. 169–170 [*Aspebetus*].

⁵⁹ Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Sabae*, 13.

⁶⁰ Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Euthymii*, 10.

⁶¹ Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Joannis*, 13.

⁶² Theodoret, *HR*, XXVI, 16 (A paralysed chief of one of the tribes asked for healing. Symeon did so in return for baptizing).

⁶³ Theodoret, *HR*, XXVI, 13, 16, 18. According to Theodoret's testimony, they would come by thousands. Later on an unknown writer added that the Ishmaelites renounced the cult of Aphrodite and smashed the idols before the saint (XXVI, 13). Arabs were probably among the inhabitants of Djabala in Syria, south of Latakia (Theodoret, *HR*, XXVIII, 1–5).

them as *conflict and symbiosis*⁶⁴. On the one hand, they often fell a victim of Arab raids, on the other – they could sometimes count on assistance from their nomadic neighbours. Nilus of Sinai was writing about some Arabs of the Pharan Valley who had defended the ascetics against fellow Arabs from Eluza⁶⁵, even before they were converted by Moses the Pharanite (Nilus described them as pagans). Even after the Muslim invasion on 643 the monks could count on defence by the Arab warriors of Pharan⁶⁶.

The generally poor opinion about the ethnic group as a whole might hardly regard its particular members. Pseudo-Zachariah left a very good account of phylarch Al-Aṣfar (Tapharas)⁶⁷, whom he characterised as wise, brave and excellent in military art⁶⁸. Byzantine authors wrote with some reverence even of their enemies, e.g. about Al-Mundhir III from the tribe of Lakhmids.

5.2. Intellectual Argument with Islam

The Muslim invasion of the territory of the empire made Byzantines see the Arabs chiefly as God's enemies⁶⁹, or a tool through which He punishes Christians for their sins. They were perceived as ruthless raiders, robbing the goods of the Byzantines and enslaving them. As we have been trying to point out in another chapter, during the initial raids their victims remained practically unaware of the religion of their invaders. Among the Arab warriors there were both ardent Muslims, close to Muḥammad, but also freshly converted individuals, who probably hardly understood the Prophet's message⁷⁰. The situation was getting

⁶⁴ U. Scharer, *The Problem of Nomadic Allies in the Roman East*, [in:] *Kingdoms and Principalities in the Roman Near East*, eds. T. Kaiser, M. Fecella, Stuttgart 2010, p. 266.

⁶⁵ V. Christides, *Once again the "Narrations" of Nilus Sinaiticus*, B 43, 1973, p. 42. Although the source is mostly a product of imagination, it contains real elements as well. There are many manuscripts of Nilus' text, though it still lacks a critical edition. The only available edition is in PG 79, cols. 583–694. An abbreviated version of *The Life of Nilus* can be found in: *Basilii imp. Menologium*, ed. J.-P. Migne, [in:] PG 117, cols. 256–257.

⁶⁶ F. Nau, *Le texte grec des récits du moine Anastase*, OCh 2, 1900, pp. 87–89.

⁶⁷ Ταφάρης – John Malalas, XVIII, 26; Jacob of Edessa, p. 240 [319].

⁶⁸ Pseudo-Zachariah, IX, 2. In the Latin version he was described as: *vir bellicosus ac sapiens, et armis Romanorum multum exercitatus*. I. Shahîd (*Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, vol. I/I, *Political and Military History*, Washington 1995, p. 64) explains that by religious sympathies of the author.

⁶⁹ Theophanes, AM 6165, p. 353.

⁷⁰ W.E. Kaegi, *Initial Byzantine Reactions to the Arab Conquest*, [in:] *The Expansion of the Early Islamic State*, ed. F.M. Donner, Aldershot 2008, p. 114. J. Tolan is of similar opinion.

even more complicated due to the fact that Christian Arabs fought on the side of the empire. When the presence of Muslims on the territories torn away from Byzantine rule became permanent, it forced the Christians living there to define some attitude in face of the new, rapidly developing religion. While historians referred to the theological issues only marginally, those issues were absolutely essential for theologians, and the burden of the ideological struggle against Muḥammad's religion rested upon their shoulders.

Although in the turmoil of war there was no time for a serious exchange of views, the "debate" between Christian and Muslims commenced even during the Prophet's life⁷¹. Later tradition impelled the caliphs to make efforts to present Islam to other nations as well. The ḥadīth attributed the custom of sending letters in praise of the new religion to neighbour rulers and encouraging them to convert to Muḥammad⁷². One of such letters was to have been addressed to Emperor Heraclius⁷³. The likelihood of such a correspondence is discussed by Marek M. Dziekan in this volume.

It seems worthwhile, however, to bring up a narration, popular in the Muslim tradition, about an alleged meeting of Heraclius and Abū Sufyān, a prominent citizen of Mecca and future father-in-law of the Prophet. It has been preserved in several versions in Al-Bukhārī's collection of ḥadīth⁷⁴. In the longest version, the emperor had a wish to learn about Muḥammad and called Abū Sufyān, who was on his way with a Quraysh caravan, to Jerusalem⁷⁵. All of the described events were said to have taken place during the armistice between the Quraysh

J. Tolán, *Réactions chrétiennes aux conquêtes musulmanes. Étude comparée des auteurs chrétiens de Syrie et Espagne*, CCM 44, 2001, pp. 350–352.

⁷¹ S. Kaeting Toenies, *Defending the "People of the Truth" in the Early Islamic Period. The Christian Apologies of Abu Ra'itah*, Leiden–Boston 2006, p. 3.

⁷² A. Abel, *La lettre Polemique d'Arethas à l'emir à Damas*, B 24, 1954, pp. 349–350. Sebeos, 36 – there is information about a letter sent by the caliph to emperor Constantine (actually to Constans II).

⁷³ The story about the correspondence between Muḥammad and the emperor can be found in a ḥadīth in the collection of Al-Bukhārī (vol. I, I, no. 6; ed. M. Muḥsin Khān – all references in this chapter according to this edition). The description can be found in: L. Pouzet, *Le ḥadīth d'Héraclius: une caution byzantine à la prophétie de Muḥammad*, [in:] *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam VII^e–VIII^e siècles. Actes du Colloque international Lyon–Maison de l'Orient Méditerranéen, Paris–Institut du Monde Arabe, 11–15 Septembre 1990*, eds. P. Canivet, J.-P. Rey-Couais, Damas 1992, pp. 59–65.

⁷⁴ Bukhārī, I, 16; II, 48; XLVIII, 846; LII, 60, 191, 221; LIII, 399; LX, 75; LXXIII, 10; LXXIV, 277; LXXXIX, 304; M. Gaudetroy-Demombynes, *Narodziny islamu*, transl. H. Olędzka, Warszawa 1988, pp. 132–134.

⁷⁵ Bukhārī, I, 16; LIII, 399. Heraclius chose him, since he was Muḥammad's relative (Bukhārī, LII, 191).

and Muslims, before Abū Sufyān converted to Islam. Despite that, listening to his answers, Heraclius was said to have believed that Muḥammad was indeed a true prophet⁷⁶. He agreed to accept the letter from the Prophet via the governor of Bostra⁷⁷. Abū Sufyān concluded that Heraclius was scared of Muḥammad, and was made to think that the latter would become a great conqueror someday⁷⁸. Afterwards, some mysterious voice told him he would be defeated by circumcised men, so he decided to exterminate all Jews. Later on he learned (through an envoy of the king of Ghassānids) that the Arabs were circumcised too, and he understood that the time of their reign was coming. Having arrived in Homs, he gathered his top dignitaries and announced that conversion to Islam was the only chance for the empire to survive. As they strongly opposed, he explained that he only wanted to test their Christian faith⁷⁹. Another ḥadīth informs that Heraclius in fact recognised Muḥammad as a prophet⁸⁰. According to some other version of that narration, cited by Maurice Gaudefroy-Demombynes, the emperor would send Muḥammad's letter to a certain patriarch, as more competent in the questions of faith. The latter during a meeting (services?) at a church was supposed to have announced his conversion to Islam, but the angry crowd killed him upon hearing that⁸¹. Those narrations, albeit fictional, shows the Muslims desired acceptance of their beliefs by some external authority in order to prove that the message of the Prophet was convincing also for their enemies.

While the above examples of religious exchange of information seem to be the product of their authors alone, it is true that already during the conquest there were meetings between the caliphate leaders and representatives of local population. Since the latter, not infrequently, chose bishops as their representatives, especially in the cities, the meetings sometimes turned into religious disputes, particularly when the Muslims encouraged the Christians to convert to Islam. A good example of such an event was a debate that took place on 9 May 693 between the Patriarch of Antioch, John and 'Amr ibn Al-Āṣ. What is interesting, the debate was observed by a group of Christians of different denominations, including Christianised Arabs⁸². The record shows how little both parties knew

⁷⁶ B u k h ā r ī, I, 16; LX, 75. Abū-Sufyan emphasised that Muḥammad told Muslims to do good, pray, stay clean and be on good terms with relatives (B u k h ā r ī, LXXIII, 10).

⁷⁷ B u k h ā r ī, I, 16; LII, 191; LII, 221; LXXIV, 277. Another ḥadīth was telling that Heraclius wanted to learn about Muḥammad upon receiving a letter from him (B u k h ā r ī, LX, 75).

⁷⁸ B u k h ā r ī, I, 16; LII, 191.

⁷⁹ B u k h ā r ī, I, 16; LX, 75.

⁸⁰ B u k h ā r ī, II, 48; XLVIII, 846; LII, 60.

⁸¹ M. G a u d e f r o y - D e m o m b y n e s, *Narodziny islamu...*, pp. 133–134.

⁸² *John and the Emir*, 7–9 (further references after F. Nau's edition).

about each other's faith⁸³. The patriarch, supported by other Church dignitaries⁸⁴, seemed to be unaware of the fact that according to Muḥammad's learning Christ was the Word of God to Muslims too⁸⁵. At no point of the discussion did he quote the Qur'ān, which should not be surprising, as its final version did not yet exist then. On the other hand, no verses from the Bible were quoted in 'Amr's arguments, either. When 'Amr rejected the *Book of Prophets*, the patriarch did not remind him that Islam recognised Old Testament prophets as well, and confined himself to quoting the Torah⁸⁶. 'Amr could not understand why the Christians differed in faith, although they believed in the same Gospel⁸⁷. However, he did not fail to notice the major difference between Christianity and Islam, when he tried to negate the divinity of Christ⁸⁸. Distrustful of the bishop, he sought confirmation of Biblical verses from a Jew, not known by name⁸⁹. The lack of knowledge did not mean lack of interest. 'Amr was interested in the Christian law. According to Michael the Syrian he wanted to learn Christian writings, too. At his request the patriarch had them translated into Arabic, which would have been done by some Christianised Arabs⁹⁰.

With time the Byzantines expanded their knowledge about Islam from Christians under the Arab rule who were able to read both the Bible and the Qur'ān, and translate them into Arabic, Greek or Syriac. The Muslims – except for converts – knew only Arabic, which is why the knowledge of the Bible among Arab scholars was fairly poor until tenth century, whereas the knowledge of the Christians about Islam expanded quickly⁹¹.

Having got acquainted with the rival, the Christians could undertake a battle on words and arguments. There was another important reason why, from the early eighth century, the Christian elite began to confront themselves with the Muslim challenge. After the few decades that followed the conquest one

⁸³ The text was written *post factum* and sent to other bishops. Michael the Syrian, vol. II, pp. 431–432.

⁸⁴ *John and the Emir*, 10.

⁸⁵ *The Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue: A Collection of Documents from the First Three Islamic Centuries, 632–900 AD: Translations with Commentary*, ed. N.A. Newman, Hatfield 1993, p. 8.

⁸⁶ *John and the Emir*, 6.

⁸⁷ *John and the Emir*, 1–2.

⁸⁸ *John and the Emir*, 5–7.

⁸⁹ *John and the Emir*, 6.

⁹⁰ Michael the Syrian, vol. II, pp. 431–432. Here the Arab leader demanded a Gospel which would conform with the Qur'ān.

⁹¹ It ought to be remembered that Anastasius of Sinai did not call that religion by name and mentioned neither Muḥammad, nor the Qur'ān. J. Tolán, *Réactions chrétiennes...*, pp. 354–355.

could hardly believe that the situation would rapidly change and that the caliphs' rule would be overthrown. At some point the Byzantines had to accept the idea that getting rid of the invaders from the occupied territories would not happen as quickly as they had expected. That kind of thinking could be observed as early as in the works of Sebeos and Anastasius of Sinai⁹². Dionysius of Tel Mahre did not believe in an imminent expulsion of Muslims, either, although he trusted that the next generation would live to see it⁹³. Ghewond was of a similar opinion and perceived the fulfilment of King David's prophecy in a civil war between the Arabs, trusting that God would not forsake the faithful⁹⁴. But when the hopes did not come true, one had to accept that the role of Christians was to survive in an alien, often hostile environment and to keep their faith. Another obligation was to keep up the spirit of fellow believers.

This was even more important considering that the new religion seemed attractive to many inhabitants of the seized territories⁹⁵. Conversions were taking place even during the conquest, yet they were insignificant in number and were met with condemnation⁹⁶. But then the situation got worse. That was the result of both top-down action, initiated by the caliphs, and of individual missionary activities taken up by zealous Muslims. Despite the prohibition of forced conversion contained in the Qur'an⁹⁷, and protection extended to the People of the Book for as long as they paid taxes, the belief in the superiority of Islam over other religions made lives of members of said religions difficult⁹⁸. Such a policy was initiated already by the Umayyads, exemplified by the so-called *Covenant of Umar*⁹⁹. Building the mosque of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem – a sa-

⁹² W.E. Kaegi, *Initial Byzantine Reactions...*, p. 121.

⁹³ Dionysius of Tel Mahre, p. 1; J. Flori, *L'Islam et la fin des temps. L'interprétation prophétique des invasions musulmanes dans la chrétienté médiévale*, Paris 2007, p. 118.

⁹⁴ Ghewond, 5, 19, 20; J. Flori, *L'Islam...*, pp. 119–120.

⁹⁵ In the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* we find a prophecy that it was going to happen (Pseudo-Methodius, XII, 3–6). It was in fact a description of the actual status. What is important, the author emphasized, that those who renounced their faith did so with no compulsion, beatings or torment (XII, 3), but freely (XII, 6).

⁹⁶ John of Nikiu wrote of examples like that (CXIII, 1, p. 182; eds. R.H. Charles, D. Litt; all references to this source after that edition). After the capture of Caesarea, Tripoli and Tyre many citizens of those cities accepted Islam. Cf. D.J. Constantelos, *The Moslem Conquest of Near East as Revealed in Greek Sources of the VIIth and the VIIIth Century*, B 42, 1972, p. 349. The chronicler maintains that they did it because of fear.

⁹⁷ *Let there be no compulsion in religion. Qur'an*, 2:256 (transl. A. Yusuf Ali).

⁹⁸ For example by raising taxes, removal from public space or change of the monetary system. S. Kaeting Toenies, *Defending...*, p. 15.

⁹⁹ There is huge literature on this subject. Probably the most important is: A.S. Tritton, *Caliphs and Their Non-Muslim Subjects. A Critical Study of the Covenant of Umar*, Abingdon–

cred place for Jews and Christians alike – had a symbolic dimension¹⁰⁰. The durability of Arab power also made people convert to Islam¹⁰¹. When the number of converts began to grow, one had to explain why so many were listening to Muḥammad. The initial explanation that it was only ignorance and emotionality of the Arabs which decided of his success¹⁰² proved insufficient.

The Church certainly felt threatened and was aware that counteractions were necessary¹⁰³. From the early eighth century we can observe flourishing of polemic literature. It was intended primarily for Christians, whom it was to give arguments in the discussions with followers of Islam and to encourage them to stand by the faith of their forefathers. Among the texts written at that time, we should mention the alleged answer of emperor Leo III to 'Umar II's letter¹⁰⁴, anonymous apology of Christianity, dated by Khalil S. Samir to 738 or 771¹⁰⁵, testimony of

New York 2008. See also: A. N o t h, *Problems of Differentiation between Muslim and Non-Muslim: Re-reading the "Ordinances of Umar"*, [in:] *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, ed. R. H o y l a n d, Aldershot 2004, pp. 103–124.

¹⁰⁰ J. T o l a n, *Réactions chrétiennes...*, p. 355; G.J. R e i n i n k, *Early Christian Reactions to the Building of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem*, ChrV 2 (8), 2001, pp. 227–241; O. G r a b a r, *The Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem*, AOr 3, 1959, pp. 33–62.

¹⁰¹ G h e w o n d, 43; J. F l o r i, *L'Islam...*, pp. 119–120.

¹⁰² A.-Th. K h o u r y, *Polemique byzantine contre l'Islam (VIII–XIII s.)*, Leiden 1972, pp. 137–140. E.g. Arethas defined Muslims as emotional, unable to act reasonably or to think logically. A r e t h a s, p. 296.

¹⁰³ A. A r g y r i o u (*Perception de l'Islam et traductions du Coran dans le monde byzantine grec*, B 75, 2005, p. 25) writes about a hazard to the very existence of the Church. J. Tolan (*Réactions chrétiennes...*, p. 358) believes that the scale of conversions made Christian theologians define the place of Islam in history.

¹⁰⁴ L e o I I I, cols. 315–324; A. A b e l, *La lettre Polemique...*, pp. 348–349. Although Leo III's response to the caliph is dated to 719, the text preserved in Ghewond was written later. Bedrosyan considered it to be interpolation and did not add it to his translation of Ghewond. For more on that, see: A. J e f f r e y, *Gevond's Text of the Correspondence between 'Umar II and Leo III*, HTR 37, 1944, pp. 269–332 (here we can find the English translation of the letter). The scholar thinks that its author was Leo Syncellus, contemporary to Nicetas (*ibidem*, p. 348), and it was addressed to Ibrāhīm Al-Nagīramī, (A.A. V a s i l i e v, *Byzance et les Arabes*, vol. II/II, transl. H. G r é g o i r e, M. C a n a r d, Bruxelles 1930, p. 203sq).

¹⁰⁵ The scholar is inclined to accept the earlier date (K.S. S a m i r, *Une apologie arabe du christianisme d'époque umayyade?*, POr 16, 1990/1991, p. 91). On that apology, see: M.N. S w a n s o n, *Beyond Proofexting: Approaches to the Qur'an in Some Early Arabic Christian Apologies*, MWO 88.3–4, 1998, pp. 297–319. The manuscript of the apology can be found in the Library of Congress (Sināi ar. 154). The text, along with the English translation, was published at the end of nineteenth century: M. D u n l o p G i b s o n, *Studia Sinaitica*, vol. VII, London 1889, pp. 2–36 (translation); 74–107 (Arabic text). K.S. Samir (*Une apologie arabe...*, pp. 85–89) has pointed out serious errors in both reading the Arabic original and in the translation..

John of Damascus' (first half of eighth century)¹⁰⁶, and homilies of bishop Mar Aba II (641–751) from southern Iraq and katholikos of the Assyrian Church of the East¹⁰⁷. Fairly close to the discussed times is the polemic of patriarch Timothy with caliph Al-Mahdī (781) and a religious dialogue from Jerusalem, known also as the account from a meeting of a Jacobite monk with the emir of the city (ca. 800)¹⁰⁸.

In the following centuries we can observe a veritable avalanche of polemic literature, but as it goes beyond the frames of this monograph, we shall refer to it only in passing¹⁰⁹. It should be noted though, that as the time went on, Christian writings in Arabic played more and more important role in the discussion with Muslims, which was caused by the popularity of that language¹¹⁰, and by the fact that some of the Arab rulers were interested in religious issues and themselves initiated debates. The Nestorian katholikos, Timothy (727–823), laid out the Christian doctrine upon request of caliph Al-Mahdī¹¹¹. Although he wrote in Syriac, the Arabic version of his work is better known to the public. His successors decided to debate with Muslims in their language.

To all those who plunged into reading, it became evident that the Bible and the *Qurʾān* were irreconcilable. Particularly disputable were the dogmas of Incarnation and of the Holy Trinity¹¹². Step by step, Christians understood that Islam was not a heresy of Ishmaelites, as John of Damascus had claimed, but an entirely separate religion. Two contradicting phenomena contributed to such an understanding: more and more common conversions to Islam and persistence of Christian communities on Islamic territories¹¹³.

¹⁰⁶ John was also the author of *Disputatio Saraceni et Christiani*. See: A. A r g y r i o u, *Perception...*, p. 27.

¹⁰⁷ G.J. R e i n i n k, *Political Power and Right Religion in the East-Syrian Disputation between a Monk of Bēt Hālē and an Arab Notable*, [in:] *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam*, eds. E. G r y p e o u, D.R. T h o m a s, M. S w a n s o n, Leiden 2006, p. 155sq.

¹⁰⁸ *The Early Christian-Muslim Dialog...*, pp. 269–354 (the text preserved only in fragments, pp. 282–340).

¹⁰⁹ Of particular importance were the texts by Al-Kindī (c. 820), Nicetas of Byzantium (ninth century) and Bartholomew of Edessa (tenth century). I have devoted a separate article to the polemic between Christians and Muslims: T. W o l i ń s k a, *Elity chrześcijańskie wobec islamu (VII–X w.)*, VP 64, 2015, (forthcoming), where I have also discussed the works chronologically beyond the frames of this book.

¹¹⁰ M. S a d o w s k i, *Chrześcijańska arabskojęzyczna literatura apologetyczna Bliskiego i Środkowego Wschodu w okresie Abbasydów (750–1050)*, STHSO 32, 2012, pp. 90–92; J. T o l a n, *Réactions chrétiennes...*, p. 354. S. Kaeting Toenies (*Defending...*, p. 19) has used an adequate term *the new lingua franca* to define the process of Arabisation.

¹¹¹ *Timothy's Apology*, pp. 1–162.

¹¹² S. Kaeting Toenies, *Defending...*, p. 5; M. S a d o w s k i, *Chrześcijańska...*, pp. 100–104.

¹¹³ S. Kaeting Toenies, *Defending...*, pp. 5–6.

Besides the two mentioned above, among the subjects discussed in disputes there was the issue of recognizing Muḥammad as a prophet, the status of the Qurʾān and Gospels and their credibility, as well as differences in the legal and religious practices. While Christian polemicists questioned the value of the Qurʾān, their Muslim opponents accused them of falsifying parts of the Bible¹¹⁴. Sandra Kaeting Toenies emphasised that many of the issues were not new to Christians. They had already been accused with similar charges by Jews (absolute monotheism, problems with incarnation)¹¹⁵.

The first preserved Christian apology was of Melkite authorship¹¹⁶. The introduction made numerous references to the Qurʾān¹¹⁷, demonstrating a good knowledge of the Muslim Holy Book. That fact has made Khalil Samir think that he did not live in an isolated Christian ghetto, but must have actively participated in the Arab culture¹¹⁸. That probably influenced his narration – a non-aggressive, conciliatory lecture of the doctrine, which would demonstrate Christianity as good for mankind¹¹⁹. The first part was a collection of arguments supporting the authenticity of the Holy Trinity dogma¹²⁰, followed by the idea of Incarnation, pointing out that God spread His Word to defeat Satan, free mankind from sin and provide resurrection¹²¹. In that way the basic points of disagreement between both religions were set up.

The writings of John of Damascus (ca. 674–749), a member of its Christian elite, had a much greater response than the text quoted above. Living in a Muslim neighbourhood gave him the opportunity to thoroughly study the new religion. The description of Islam contained in the final chapter of the treaty *On Heresies*¹²² is his own¹²³. John knew the Qurʾān, if not from personal lecture, then certainly second hand. He quoted it, albeit only short passages and not very pre-

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 8–9; M. Sadowski, *Chrześcijańska...*, pp. 95–97.

¹¹⁵ S. Kaeting Toenies, *Defending...*, p. 7.

¹¹⁶ K.S. Samir, *Une apologie arabe...*, pp. 92, 105. The author emphasizes that Melkites were dominant among the Christians of Damascus and it was not by accident that the first Christian text in Arabic was Melkite.

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 97.

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 105.

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 105. The scholar pays attention to the other features of the discussed text: lacking philosophical arguments, homiletic style and being based on the Bible and patristic literature (*ibidem*, p. 120sq).

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 97–98.

¹²¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 100–102.

¹²² *Ibidem*, p. 91.

¹²³ John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI). In describing other heresies the author sought inspiration in the earlier treatises.

cisely¹²⁴. He defined Sūras as writings (γραφαι)¹²⁵, as though they were separate texts. His opinion had influence on many Byzantines¹²⁶. Historians (primarily Theophanes the Confessor and George the Monk), as well as theologians, utilised the arguments from his work.

Characterizing the religion of Muḥammad (whom he called Mamed) John reached for the Qurʾān and called up the most essential parts of its teaching. He paid particular attention to Islamic monotheism, by quoting the verse that *He begetteth not, nor is He begotten*¹²⁷ and to those elements of the new religion which were at odds with Christianity. He emphasised that for Islam's faithful Christ was the God's Word and Spirit, but not His Son; that according to them He was God's slave and was not crucified (only His shadow was) – but ascended up to Heavens¹²⁸. According to Muslims, Jesus himself was to reprove His disciples when they regarded Him to be the Son of God¹²⁹. In the opinion of Father Jan W. Żelazny, the rejection of Christ's divinity was the chief characteristic of Islam noted by John of Damascus¹³⁰.

Most of the information delivered by John about the Muslim religion was correct. He knew that its followers could not celebrate Shabbat, get baptised, or drink wine. They could eat food forbidden by the Torah (but he did not say which), but they could not eat other kind of food (he did not say which either)¹³¹. Still, the information was not free of errors. We do not know from where he obtained the information that Saracens got circumcised along with their wives¹³².

¹²⁴ E.g. he concluded his polemics with a free verse of the Qurʾān (5:115). See also: A. Argyriou, *Perception...*, pp. 28–29.

¹²⁵ John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI), 95, 149, 152. He named Sūra 4 (*The Women*), 5 (*The Table Spread*) and 2 (*The Heifer*). He also considered Qurʾānic the text *She-Camel of God* (C [CI], 114), which is not in the Qurʾān.

¹²⁶ His works were translated into Arabic and used by Muslim theologians as well. J. Tolán, *Réactions chrétiennes...*, p. 358.

¹²⁷ Qurʾān, 112:1–4.

¹²⁸ John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI), 17–31.

¹²⁹ John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI), 17–31, p. 135; George the Monk, p. 700 (ed. C. de Boor = IV, 235, 7, ed. J.-P. Migne, col. 868); M. Sadowski, *Chrześcijańska...*, pp. 98–100.

¹³⁰ J.W. Żelazny, *Patrystyczne...*, p. 309. At the same time he emphasised that according to the Qurʾān God at Christ's request, had sent down to Him and the ones who accompanied him the *a table set* (Qurʾān, 5:114–115).

¹³¹ John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI), 152; George the Monk, p. 700 (ed. C. de Boor = IV, 235, 6, ed. J.-P. Migne, col. 868).

¹³² John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI), 152.

It is also difficult to say where he found the text *God's She-Camel*¹³³, which was neither in the *Qur'an*, nor in the Muslim tradition.

John refuted the charge of adding associators (ἑταίριστάς) to God, i.e. being polytheist¹³⁴. He accused Muslims of inconsistency, saying that if they regarded Christ as God's Word, they regarded Him as God at the same time, as the Word and Spirit were inseparable in the one in whom they existed¹³⁵. He rejected the critics of the cult of the Cross, and accused the Muslims of idolatry. He maintained that they worshipped the Morning Star and a stone which was the head of Aphrodite *Habar* (he certainly meant Al-Ka 'ba)¹³⁶. He must have been aware that an accusation like that was indefensible in his times – for he added that the Arabs used to be idolaters until the times of Heraclius¹³⁷, but now (i.e. in the early eighth century) they were simply heretics¹³⁸. They believed that Abraham and Hagar used to make love on that stone or that Isaac was to be sacrificed thereon¹³⁹.

Trying to stand up to Islam, the Christians had to attack its founder. John of Damascus spoke of him with contempt as of a *false prophet* (ψευδοπροφήτης)¹⁴⁰. He emphasised that there was no-one to witness that his mission was from God – because he had received his revelation in a dream, and nobody had announced his coming¹⁴¹. When it turned out that the *Qur'an* in fact did contain references to the Bible, announcing the arrival of Muḥammad¹⁴², the Muslims were accused of falsifying the Scripture.

Muḥammad's revelations were explained rationally and in a way that was derogatory to him at the same time. Theophanes knew that Muḥammad was to have

¹³³ It is possible that the story of a she-camel, who is the mother of a baby-camel, although no male has inseminated her, was a mocking paraphrase of the Gospel (C [CI], 114–148).

¹³⁴ John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI), 61–68, p. 136. He referred to the negation of Christ's divinity in the *Qur'an* (among others: 2:116; 5:73; 7:33; 19:35). He pointed out that the Muslims themselves distinguished between God and Spirit.

¹³⁵ John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI), 69.

¹³⁶ John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI), 78–94; J.W. Żelazny, *Patrystyczne...*, p. 309.

¹³⁷ John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI), 10; *Contra Muhammad*, col. 1448.

¹³⁸ John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI), 10.

¹³⁹ John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI), 78.

¹⁴⁰ John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI), 10.

¹⁴¹ John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI), 32; J.W. Żelazny, *Patrystyczne...*, p. 309. John of Damascus pointed out that Muḥammad forbade Muslims doing anything unwitnessed and he himself could not provide a witness. Those arguments were subsequently repeated by other writers. Further on that: A.-Th. Khoury, *Polemique...*, pp. 22–23, 29–30, 105–109.

¹⁴² *Kur'an*, 2:129; 7:157; 61:6.

obtained his message from God through Archangel Gabriel, but he rejected that. He maintained that Muḥammad had suffered from epilepsy, which disturbed and grieved his wife Khadīdja. To explain his attacks, Muḥammad was to tell her he was having visions that caused loss of consciousness. She did not trust him at first, but when his words were confirmed by a certain monk, expelled (from Byzantium?) for unorthodox views, she began telling other women of the tribe that her husband was a prophet. The new beliefs (heresy for Theophanes) started to spread, first secretly, then through war, finally in the open. All that would last for 29 years¹⁴³. According to another version, Muḥammad was to have a dream about the archangel, which he took for reality¹⁴⁴. In the most extreme interpretation, Muḥammad was tormented by demons¹⁴⁵.

Not only Muḥammad's teaching, but also he himself was attacked. It was reminded that he had been an orphan with no means to live, who owed his riches to a woman. According to Theophanes, Muḥammad used to work for a rich widow Khadīdja, leading caravans between Palestine and Egypt. He later married her, thus obtaining her estate¹⁴⁶. John of Damascus accused him of immoral conduct – he allowed other men to have four wives and as many concubines as they wished, as well as the right to walk out on their wives, because he had himself desired another man's wife¹⁴⁷. The Prophet was also blamed for disloyalty, lies, licentiousness, lack of education, and impiety. Christian polemicists maintained that he had not been worthy enough to be a real envoy of God¹⁴⁸.

¹⁴³ Theophanes, AM 6122. A similar but abbreviated story was cited in: George the Monk, pp. 698–699 (ed. C. de Boor = IV, 235, 3, ed. J.-P. Migne, col. 865). Also Bartholomew of Edessa informed of Muḥammad's epilepsy (Bartholomew of Edessa, col. 1428).

¹⁴⁴ John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI), 45; A.-Th. Khoury, *Polemique...*, p. 79.

¹⁴⁵ Abū Qurra, *Opusculae*, 20, cols. 1545–1548; A.-Th. Khoury, *Polemique...*, p. 79.

¹⁴⁶ Theophanes, AM 6122. Later authors made the story more colourful, writing about Muḥammad's poor look and miserable existence in his childhood (*Contra Muhammad*, col. 1448). Due to his ugliness Khadīdja would not want to sleep with him. They said that he had been the son of a slave woman, Amina, and at the same time he would not have been the son of 'Abd Allāh. Bartholomew of Edessa described colourfully how Muḥammad's grandfather went to the market with his son to find him a woman slave, and then Amina got pregnant, it was not certain if with 'Abd Allāh or with one of the shepherds. Muḥammad would be born at a pasture and brought home on camel manure. Cf.: Bartholomew of Edessa, col. 1425; A.-Th. Khoury, *Polemique...*, p. 65.

¹⁴⁷ John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI), 95.

¹⁴⁸ A.-Th. Khoury (*Polemique...*, pp. 59–102) discusses Muḥammad's life, particularly his moral attitude, as it was described by enemies of Islam (*ibidem*, pp. 87–102).

The Qurʾān, another objects of polemic attacks, was presented as a false scripture. John of Damascus suggested that Muḥammad (Mamed) had read the Old and New Testament by chance and had been taught by a certain Arian monk, as a result of which he had *scribbled some laughable writings* and was telling everybody he had obtained them by God¹⁴⁹. For that reason Islam was, according to John, a deceptive cult, herald of Antichrist, and a heresy¹⁵⁰. The presence of the Old and New Testament elements in Muḥammad's teaching would have been borrowed from Jews and heretics during his business trips when he had worked for Khadidja¹⁵¹. It was said that some heretic monk used to teach Muḥammad¹⁵². There was a dispute about who that monk may have been: according to some authors he was Arian¹⁵³, according to others – Nestorian and Hesychast. He would have been responsible for Muḥammad's idea of Christ, usually perceived as Nestorian, although Anastasius of Sinai saw connection between Muslim beliefs and Monophysitism¹⁵⁴.

Having questioned the Qurʾān and criticised Muḥammad himself, the polemists made conclusions about Islam as a whole. It was regarded as a false religion, which would be attested by contradictions a true religion could not have. It was emphasised that its practices did not provide salvation and it did not offer a better morality than other religions. They turned down the idea of successive religions, according to which Judaism was followed by Christianity, which in turn would be followed by Islam¹⁵⁵.

The polemists stressed the essential difference in the method of distribution of Christianity and Islam – the former spread the Good Tidings by the force of its message, the latter – by force alone. Already Abraham the Jew, in the *Teaching*

¹⁴⁹ John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI), 10–16. In another place he assessed the opinion presented in Sūra 2 as ridiculous (C [CI], 32).

¹⁵⁰ John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI), 1.

¹⁵¹ Theophanes, AM 6122; George the Monk, pp. 699–700 (ed. C. de Boor = IV, 235, 6, ed. J.-P. Migne, col. 865A–B).

¹⁵² John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI), 10–16. That monk appeared in sources under the name of Bahīrā or Sergios Bahīrā. The story of a Christian who had recognised a prophet in Muḥammad appeared first in Muslim sources and it was later picked up by the writings of Christian authors, who changed its connotation. More on that: B. Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Bahīrā. Eastern Christians Apologies and Apokalyptic in Responce to Islam*, Leiden–Boston 2009; S. Gerö, *The Legend of the Monk Bahīrā, the Cult of the Cross and Iconoclasm*, [in:] *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam VII^e–VIII^e siècles...*, pp. 47–58; A. Bahkōu, *The Christian Legend of Monk Bahīrā. The Syriac Manuscript of Mardin 259/2: Study and English Translation*, n.p. 2006.

¹⁵³ John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI), 10–16. Repeated by Abū Kurra.

¹⁵⁴ For more on that, see: J. Tolán, *Réactions chrétiennes...*, pp. 354–355.

¹⁵⁵ A.-Th. Khoury, *Polemique...*, p. 45.

of Jacob, pointed out the fact that Muḥammad had arrived with the sword and army, which proved that he indeed was not a true prophet¹⁵⁶.

Attacking Islam, polemic texts often reached for moral issues. We have mentioned John of Damascus who accused Muslims of circumcising women¹⁵⁷. Also polygamy and position of females in Islam was rejected¹⁵⁸.

Regardless of the intellectual level, knowledge and literary skills of particular authors, they used similar arguments. They focused on fighting the new religion and defending Christian dogmas. The intensity of Islam's assessment varied as well. Theophanes did it quietly, avoiding emotional expressions. The writings of George the Monk about Muḥammad, his teaching and followers were diametrically different and full of pejorative expressions¹⁵⁹. For John of Damascus the Muslims were barbarians, invaders, usurpers and destroyers of social and religious order¹⁶⁰. He wrote about them with irony and sarcasm. Although he tried to keep up his temper at first, he could not keep it up for long and said at one point that *into the souls of asses, where you [the Muslims], too, like beasts are destined to go*¹⁶¹. It is difficult therefore to agree with the suggestion that John avoided using the name of the Prophet because he was afraid of potential repressions for insulting him¹⁶².

The above examples, although incomplete, are still representative, and show that at first the Christians did not attempt to confront the challenge of a new, competitive monotheistic religion. They were initially not aware of the changes that were taking place in the Arabian Peninsula, and treated the invaders like loot-hungry nomads. They did not know their religious views and had no chance learn them due to the lack of Muslim writings. An additional complication was the fact that some of the Arab tribes had been Christianised prior to the birth of Islam. If we add that Islam made references to the Old and the New Testament, it is easy to understand that the victims of the first Arab raids did not know who, from the religious point of view, they were dealing with. This is why Christian sources initially spoke of the Arabs as pagans. Christian writers remembered that before Islam the invaders used to worship idols. Some even maintained that

¹⁵⁶ *Doctrina Iacobi*, V, 16, pp. 209–210.

¹⁵⁷ John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI), 95.

¹⁵⁸ John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI), 10–16. Cf. *Kur'ān*, 2:223 (*Your wives are as a tilth unto you*).

¹⁵⁹ J.V. Maksimov has found nearly a hundred invectives in his text (*Georgij Amartol ob islame*, [in:] *Vizantijskie sočinenija ob islame*, ed. Ju. V. Maksimov, Moskva 2012, p. 66).

¹⁶⁰ A. Zhyrkowa, *Wstęp*, [in:] Jan Damasceniński, *Dialektyka albo rozdziały filozoficzne. De haeresibus*, transl. A. Zhyrkowa, Kraków 2011, p. 21.

¹⁶¹ John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, C (CI), 147–148.

¹⁶² J.W. Żelazny, *Patrystyczne...*, p. 310.

Muḥammad in fact had never abandoned the faith of his forefathers. Others accused him of atheism.

Then there came the opinion that Islam was a Christian heresy. The common features and differences of both faiths were pointed out – the rejection of divinity of Christ must have been alien to Monophysites¹⁶³. When Christian authors became better acquainted with the Muslim writings they began to understand the scale of differences. The assessment of Islam gradually evolved from a *sect of Hagarenes* to its recognition as a separate religion, competitive to Christianity, grown out of idolatry and with elements borrowed from different sources¹⁶⁴. In spite of that, as Sandra Kaeting Toenies has noticed, the Christians, particularly those living under the Muslim rule, still tried to find out any common points with Islam, for example they emphasised numerous references to prophets in the *Ḳurʿān*¹⁶⁵.



¹⁶³ Cf. J. Gnilk a, *Die Nazarener und der Koran. Eine Spurensuche*, Freiburg 2007. The scholar is of a different opinion, his views being closer to Nestorian.

¹⁶⁴ *The Early Christian-Muslim Dialog...*, p. 719. Cf. the description of Islam in: A g a p i u s, p. 457 [197].

¹⁶⁵ S. Kaeting Toenies, *Defending...*, p. 9.

6. A Byzantine Heritage? Outline of Art and Architecture of Early Islam (Seventh–Eighth Centuries)

The emergence of the Arab-Muslim Empire is an example of one of the fastest processes of creating a political and cultural superpower in the history of the world. Semites from the heart of the Arabian Peninsula, deprived of any significant achievements in the field of culture apart from orally transmitted poetry, within one century dominated a territory spreading from the Western edges of Europe through North Africa and up to Central Asia, becoming patrons of art and representatives of highly developed culture of those times. It was possible thanks to the rules of Islam, which aimed to eradicate tribal, clan and national divisions. The Arabs managed to bring other Semitic, Iranian and Turkish tribes, and even Persians, creators of an ancient civilization, within the orbit of their own religion and culture. This process was facilitated by a widely-spread custom of mixed marriages (exogamy), which was characteristic for the *umma*, the Muslim community, especially during the time of its greatest growth as a civilization¹.

The Arabs were eager to adopt the artistic, architectural, scientific, philosophical and literary achievements of conquered tribes². Using elements of various artistic traditions of the territories they tried to give them hallmarks of homogeneity. The Muslim attitude to art in the early period was determined by the harsh lifestyle of the former desert-dwellers, although we must also remember Arab elites, who did not exist in a cultural void before Islam and became

¹ M.M. Dziekan, *Dzieje kultury arabskiej*, Warszawa 2008, p. 13.

² K. Estreicher, *Historia sztuki w zarysie*, Kraków 1988, pp. 222–223; J. Pijoan, *Sztuka islamu*, [in:] J. Auboyer, J. Ostier, J. Pijoan, *Sztuka świata*, vol. IV, Warszawa 1990, p. 205; M.W. Alpatow, *Historia sztuki*, vol. II, *Średniowiecze*, transl. M. Kurecka, W. Wirpsza, Warszawa 1991, pp. 34–35; F. Robinson, *Islam*, transl. J. Pierzchała, M.M. Dziekan, Warszawa 1996, pp. 23–24; *Historia sztuki*, vol. V, *Bizancjum i islam*, transl. M. Pabisia k, Kraków 2010, p. 156.

familiar with achievements of other ethnic groups during trading expeditions³.

The Umayyad period (661–750) is often regarded as the formative period of Islamic art. During the initial years, although Arabic was already an official language and Islam the dominant religion of the lands united under the Umayyad reign, artists created their works according to previously established rules. The main artistic influences came from late antique naturalistic Graeco-Roman tendencies, which were predominant on eastern coast of the Mediterranean. They were complemented by more formal patterns developed by the inhabitants of Byzantium and Persia, visible especially in metalwork and depictions of animals, plants and humans. Moreover, certain elements of Mesopotamian, Visigothic, Berber, and Asian styles could be discerned. In time, however, Muslim artists developed new techniques, forms and conventions, distancing themselves from the listed patterns⁴.

The principal aim of the art of Islam was to serve the needs of the new religion and various aspects of social and economic life. Buildings of sacral character, such as mosques and sanctuaries, were erected. Architecture played the key role, while the other types of art played only secondary roles and were dependent on it⁵. Art remained at the service of rulers, who not only founded mosques, but also built palaces, schools, hospitals, bath houses, caravanserais, and later also mausoleums. In the case of the Islamic world, we can talk of dynastic art and styles typical for particular dynasties⁶.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the art of Islam in the seventh and eighth centuries, i.e. during the period of the Umayyad dynasty. It is necessary to outline its characteristic features, in particular its iconoclastic tendencies. Since architecture held the highest importance in the discussed period, it is going to be the main focus of the paper, and the most significant religious buildings (the Dome of the Rock, the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus) and secular constructions (the so-called “desert palaces”) are going to be described. It needs to be emphasised that the distinction between religious and secular art is made purely by convention – similarities between these forms are often more important than

³ The Prophet himself was reported to have visited Bostra (in modern day Syria), which was famous for its monumental buildings. A. Ballian, *Country Estates. Material Culture, and the Celebration of Princely Life: Islamic Art and Secular Domain*, [in:] *Byzantium and Islam. Age of Transition, 7th–9th Century*, ed. H.C. Evans, B. Ratliff, New York 2012, p. 202.

⁴ M.W. Alpatow, *Historia sztuki...*, pp. 34–35.

⁵ J. Binous, M. Hawari, M. Marin, G. Öneg, *Islamic Art in the Mediterranean*, [in:] *The Umayyads: The Rise of Islamic Art*, Amman 2010, p. 17.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 18.

differences⁷. We are going to depict relicts of Umayyad decorative art and coins, which constitute a valuable source of information on the subject of the official ideology and the policy of a ruler who commissioned their minting⁸.

6.1. Characteristic Features of Islamic Art

Although Islam lacks an in-depth reflection on aesthetics, it does not mean that it did not create its own ideal of beauty – connected with God and his greatest creation, the human being⁹. Beauty from the Muslim point of view requires symmetry, balance and contrast, which is particularly visible in Arabic embellishments and calligraphy¹⁰. Muslim art, whose aim is to emphasise God's glory, is permeated with the spirit of unity – the repetitiveness of arabesque¹¹ is reflected in the rhythm and rhymes of poetry and melodic line of traditional Arabic music. Muslim art is mostly non-realistic and non-mimetic – its main form of expression is abstraction, though does not mean that it is plastically poor¹².

There is a common belief that art of the analysed area was aniconic¹³, although nothing really indicates that early Muslim theology condemned images. According to some accounts, in Al-Ka'ba¹⁴, Muḥammad personally prevented one of the paintings depicting Mary with baby Jesus kneeling from destruction – having entered the temple he placed his hand on this image and said: *Destroy all the paintings except those under my hands*¹⁵.

⁷ A. Ballian, *Country Estates...*, p. 200.

⁸ C. Foss, *Arab-Byzantine Coins: Money as Cultural Continuity*, [in:] *Byzantium and Islam...*, p. 136.

⁹ M.M. Dziekan, *Dzieje...*, p. 335.

¹⁰ K. Estreicher, *Historia sztuki...*, p. 227; J. Pijon, *Sztuka islamu...*, pp. 236–238; F. Robinson, *Islam...*, pp. 200–203.

¹¹ An arabesque consisted of floral elements, which were stylised, densely distributed and filled the whole surface of the composition. M.W. Alpatow, *Historia sztuki...*, pp. 43–47.

¹² J. Białostocki, *Sztuka cenniejsza niż złoto. Opowieść o sztuce europejskiej naszej ery*, Warszawa 2004, pp. 70–71; M.M. Dziekan, *Dzieje...*, pp. 336–337; *Historia sztuki...*, p. 139.

¹³ For more information about iconoclastic tendencies in Islam see: G. Marcais, *La question des images dans l'art musulman*, B 7, 1932, pp. 161–183; O. Grabar, *Islam and Iconoclasm*, [in:] *Iconoclasm. Papers Given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, March 1975*, ed. A. Bryer, J. Herrin, Birmingham 1977, pp. 45–52.

¹⁴ Al-Ka'ba in Arabic means a cube. The most important Muslim temple is not a mosque but is situated within a mosque in Mecca. It has been a place of veneration since even before Islam. M.M. Dziekan, *Dzieje...*, pp. 341–348.

¹⁵ E. Cruikshank Dodd, *The Image of the World: Notes on the Religious Iconography of Islam*, [in:] *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World*, ed. E.R. Hoffman, Malden–Oxford–Victoria 2007, p. 193.

Unlike the Old Testament, the Qurʾān does not contain a prohibition of producing images of living creatures. However, orthodox Muslim researchers indicate particular passages of Qurʾān whose interpretation can serve as a basis for iconoclasm. One of them comes from Sūra 59:24 (*The Exile*) and states: *He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Former*¹⁶. Apart from pointing to God as the source of any creation, it does not contain an explicit prohibition of producing any kinds of images. It was sunnah, the Prophet's tradition, that limited the believers' possibilities of artistic expression. Particular ḥadīths, such as the one about the meeting of Muḥammad and his wife 'Ā'isha, contain a ban on creating images:

Her room was separated with a curtain, on which where were paintings. The Prophet torn them apart and said that on the day of resurrection those will suffer greatest torments who imitate the work of God's creation. Then 'Ā'isha ordered to make sitting pillows filled with palm tree leaves. Muḥammad did not condemn it.¹⁷

Another ḥadīth states that *angels do not enter any house in which there is a painting*¹⁸. The oldest ḥadīths explicitly prohibiting the creation of images originate from the ninth century. Muslims became critical of paintings only in the eighth century – at the exact time of the Christian iconoclasm¹⁹. Followers of Islam were then forbidden to depict God, human beings and animals²⁰. It was an extraordinary coincidence that the same issue gained equally grand significance for the two great religions simultaneously, in the during the eighth century reign of the Umayyad caliphate. One of the most eminent Christian writers, John of Damascus, from the Manṣur family, which played an important role in the Umayyad administration, was an individual who contributed substantially

¹⁶ All Qurʾānic translations in this chapter by 'Ali Quli Qara'i.

¹⁷ J. D a n e c k i, *Arabowie*, Warszawa 2001, p. 194.

¹⁸ F. B l i s s, *Zum Beispiel Islam im Alltag*, Göttingen 1998, p. 133.

¹⁹ J. P i j o a n, *Sztuka islamu...*, p. 208. According to Christian sources – Muslim texts make no mention – Umayyad caliph Yazīd II proclaimed an edict, in which he forbade the depiction of human figures and ordered the destruction of Christian crosses. A. G r a b a r, *L'iconoclisme byzantin: le dossier archéologique*, Paris 1984, pp. 155–156. Researchers do not agree on the extent to which this order was enforced. A. D a n u t a M a d e y s k a writes (*Historia świata arabskiego. Okres klasyczny: od starożytności do końca epoki Umajjadów (750)*, Warszawa 1999, p. 183): *It can be assumed that this order was probably implemented only in Damascus and areas closest to the centre of power.*

²⁰ Muslim tradition emphasises that this prohibition refers to depicting living creatures. Thus, artists used various ways to highlight that their works are related to beings devoid of a spirit. For example, they were shown without a head or with a line over the neck. A. W ą s, *Anikoniczny obraz Boga w islamie*, Art 6, 2009, p. 7.

to restoring icons in the Church to their prominent place; by linking them to the idea of salvation he gave a new meaning to their creation. In Islam there was no one to undertake such a task: according to the Muslim doctrine, the words of God contained in *Qur'an* were the key principles. The Prophet only conveyed them – thus the *Qur'an* could easily replace paintings²¹. The theories of John of Damascus were of no importance to Muslims, since they rejected the teaching of Jesus Christ's divine nature and considered Christians, who worshipped icons, to be idolaters²².

In the time of Muḥammad and his direct successors, the struggle against images was aimed at eradicating polytheism. Several centuries later new argumentation appeared: a fight against human arrogance became the centre of attention. Muslim scholars explained that only God was entitled to create. A human, when drawing living beings, usurped God's rights. Furthermore, worshipping statues, even those depicting God, was, as a matter of fact, a veneration of idols. That was an emergence of a rule, which still remains in force today, according to which it is a sin to reproduce any forms, not only gods or humans, but also animals, birds and plants²³.

As Polish researcher of Islamic art, Kazimierz Łyszcz, says:

The process was greatly influenced by literary tradition recorded in the form of the aforementioned ḥadīths, which referred to personal experiences of people from the closest surrounding of Muḥammad, or confirmed by those who, in the eyes of the believers, deserved to be trusted. The time of the openness of the new religion and its continual expansion was followed by stagnation and a phase of consolidating the rules of the new faith. One of the signs of the solidification of doctrine was a radical limitation of the freedom of using paintings.²⁴

Although some scholars claim that Islam contributed to intensifying the iconoclastic controversy in the Christian world, this thesis lacks sufficient evidence. George Ostrogorsky suggests that what influenced the decision of emperor Leo III, who banned the making of depictions of Christ and his saints, was the ruler's eastern origin²⁵. On the other hand, John of Damascus, another representative of Christian elites of Syria, supported the creation of icons. Thus, it is most probable that controversies connected with veneration of paintings had

²¹ *Historia sztuki...*, p. 139.

²² E. Cruikshank Dodd, *Image...*, p. 193.

²³ *Historia sztuki...*, p. 139.

²⁴ K. Łyszcz, *Malarstwo miniaturowe a tendencje ikonoklastyczne w sztuce islamu*, Art 6, 2009, p. 16.

²⁵ G. Ostrogorski, *Dzieje Bizancjum*, tłum. H. Evert-Kappesowa et al., Warszawa 1967, p. 185.

existed in the Mediterranean region before Muḥammad's activity. Both Islam and Christianity eventually decided that creating images was legitimate, basing this thesis on their doctrines – in Christianity God becomes a human, a visible figure, thus paintings are justified; in Islam the rejection of the dogma of incarnation results in approving the rightness of a claim that Allah can only symbolise a word²⁶. Therefore, it cannot be proven that Islam inherited the Christian tradition concerning this issue²⁷. It rather referred to ideas from the Old Testament.

Clear evidence that the matter of figurative representations was yet unresolved in the first centuries of Islam is present in the fact that quite a lot of depictions of people and animals from this period remain. The first Muslim caliphs allowed their palaces to be decorated with scenes of hunts and even the painting of naked human figures. Despite eluding the ban or interpreting it in a way which enabled artistic presentations of living beings, God remained an "inviolable" reality in Muslim art²⁸.

From the beginning, rather than paintings, it was sculptures which aroused most controversy, being equated with pagan idols, against which the zeal of the followers of the new religion was chiefly aimed. It can be proven by a frequently-quoted passage of Ẓur'ān (5:90): *O you who have faith! Indeed wine, gambling, idols and divining arrows are abominations of Satan's doing, so avoid them, so that you may be felicitous*. Interestingly, the term *idol* denoted everything that cast a shadow. Sculptures and cult object of other religions were destroyed if there was any suspicion that they might have been objects of idolatry. As K. Łyszcz concludes:

The dispute on the issue of the origins of iconoclasm still causes disagreement among researchers. Muslim scholars point to the initiating role of Byzantium, while Christians emphasise the decisive influence of Islam.²⁹

6.2. Architecture and Art after the Rise of Islam

Arabic architecture from the time of *Djāhiliyya* (lack of knowledge, ignorance) – including their greatest monument, Al-Ka'ba – did not present significant artistic value. More interesting achievements in the field of construc-

²⁶ *Historia sztuki...*, pp. 139–140.

²⁷ E. Cruikshank Dodd, *Image...*, p. 194.

²⁸ A. Wąs, *Anikoniczny...*, p. 7.

²⁹ K. Łyszcz, *Malarstwo...*, p. 16; P. Crone, *Islam, Judeo-Christianity and Byzantine Iconoclasm*, [in:] *The Formation of the Classical Islamic World*, vol. VIII, *Arab-Byzantine Relations in Early Islamic Times*, ed. M. Bonner, Aldershot 2004, pp. 361–397.

tion can be attributed to representatives of the cultures from the peripheries of the Peninsula: the Lakhmids, the Ghassānids and the Yemeni. Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥamdānī described throne halls topped with domes, built by the latter tribe. This text, however, referred to semi-mythical constructions, so it cannot be taken literally³⁰. The most famous building constructed in pre-Muslim Yemen was the royal Ghumdan Palace, which became a symbol of splendour, wealth and royal power³¹.

Since the Arabs did not have their own traditions in the area of architecture, they had to model their constructions on the achievements of the neighbouring civilizations: Byzantium and Persia. This is noticeable both in secular and in religious buildings³². The earliest monument of Muslim architecture – a mosque created through adapting the house of the Prophet in Medina – was a very simple construction. The existing building together with the adjacent yard was surrounded with a wall. Next to the Prophet's house a mosque was built from palm tree stumps and its roof was covered with palm leaves³³. The following mosques, emerging in Al-Kūfa (638–639), Bostra (638–639) and Al-Fuṣṭāṭ (642), which do not exist anymore, were also very simple in their structure³⁴. The first administration buildings, such as *dar al-imara* in Al-Kūfa and in Damascus (after 644) did not have any artistic value – they played a purely practical role. Apparently the first of the Umayyad caliphs, Mu'āwija, ordered the restructure of his quarters after being told by a Byzantine envoy that its upper part was suitable for birds and the lower, for rats³⁵.

The main difference between the early (685–724) and late (724–750) periods of Umayyad art consists of the role of carved decorations and reliefs. Until 724 AD relief sculptures were infrequent compared with mural and floor mosaics. Even in the case of those monuments in which sculptures and reliefs are

³⁰ R. Ettinghausen, O. Grabar, M. Jenkins-Madina, *Sztuka i architektura islamu 650–1250*, Warszawa 2007, p. 4.

³¹ N.N. Khoury, *The Dome of the Rock, the Ka'ba and Ghumdan: Arab Myths and Umayyad Monuments*, Muq 10, 1993, p. 61.

³² M. Guidetti, *The Byzantine Heritage in the Dār al-Islām: Churches and Mosques in al-Ruha between the Sixth and Twelfth Centuries*, Muq 26, 2009, pp. 1–36.

³³ J. Pijoan, *Sztuka...*, pp. 208–209; R. Ettinghausen, O. Grabar, M. Jenkins-Madina, *Sztuka...*, p. 5; *Historia sztuki...*, p. 141; A. Petersen, *Dictionary of Islamic Architecture*, London 2002, p. 183; J. Sauvaget, *La Mosquée Omeyyade de la Médine. Étude sur les origines architecturales de la mosquée et de la basilique*, Paris 1947.

³⁴ J. Pijoan, *Sztuka...*, p. 209; N. Rabbat, *The Meaning of the Umayyad Dome of the Rock*, Muq 6, 1990, pp. 12–21; *idem*, *The Dome of the Rock Revisited: Some Remarks on al-Wasiti's Accounts*, Muq 10, 1993, pp. 67–75.

³⁵ N. Rabbat, *The Meaning...*, p. 12.

the only decorations, they appear to be much more modest than artefacts from the later Umayyad period. Moreover, the techniques and subjects of these depictions are conservative – neither religious nor secular works contain images of living creatures. The main materials are marble and stone; stuccos appear very rarely. However, it is possible to encounter numerous marble capitals, columns and panels, in reuse³⁶; this use resembles early Christian *spolia*³⁷.

6.3. Examples of Religious Architecture: The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and the Great Mosque in Damascus

One of the most characteristic monuments of the world of Islam, not simply for its artistic merit but also for its nature as an example of purely Muslim architecture, is the Dome of the Rock (*Kubbat as-Šakhra*) in Jerusalem³⁸. Earlier buildings were of a utilitarian nature – they did not aim to be beautiful, only useful for the faithful who came to the mosque in order to pray. *Kubbat as-Šakhra* is regarded as a milestone in the history of Islamic architecture owing to the fact that, since the time of its construction at the end of the seventh century, it has not undergone any major change, thus it is now the oldest – almost unchanged – monument of the first centuries of Islam³⁹. Interestingly, it is of singular and extraordinary construction – no cases of copying its form are known to us in later Muslim architecture⁴⁰.

The Dome of the Rock was completed in the years 691–692 during the reign of 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān, the fifth caliph of the Umayyad dynasty⁴¹. In an

³⁶ R. Talgam, *The Stylistic Origins of Umayyad Sculpture and Architectural Decoration*, Wiesbaden 2004, p. 32.

³⁷ *Spolium* (pl. *spolia*, “spoil”, “loot”) is another technique of using an older architectural element (a column, a stone detail etc.) in a new building.

³⁸ According to some researchers, the choice of Jerusalem – not Damascus, the Umayyad capital – to build this mosque is significant, as it indicates willingness to emphasise the continuity and the dialogue between Islam and the preceding monotheistic religions – Judaism and Christianity. F.B. Flood, *Faith, Religion and the Material Culture of Early Islam*, [in:] *Byzantium and Islam...*, p. 246. Geographer Al-Muḳaddasī (born. 945/946), quoted by F.F. Flood (p. 248), wrote that both the Dome of the Rock and the Great Mosque of Damascus were to be a visual counterbalance to beautifully decorated Christian churches.

³⁹ M. Pınker, *Kopula...*, p. 35; O. Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, New Haven–London 1973, pp. 48–67, 71–74.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 80.

⁴¹ The reasons for constructing this building are still being discussed by scholars. One of the theories holds that 'Abd al-Malik wanted to change the direction of the ḥadždj, the Mus-

inscription on one of the walls, the name of the ruler-founder was replaced with the name of an Abbasid caliph, Al-Ma'mūn, but no attempt was made to change the date of the completion of the building⁴². *Ḳubbat as-Ṣakhra* is situated on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, near the Al-Aḳṣā mosque⁴³ and the Jewish Wailing Wall. It is built to an octagonal plan (each side is 20.59 m long), with a centrally located double dome with a diameter of 20.44 m⁴⁴. The central plan connected to the dome resembles the design of Byzantine churches. The tradition of constructing buildings of this type in the areas of Syria and Palestine has long history, dating back to Roman times, when a central plan, columns and a dome were the basic architectural elements of mausoleums⁴⁵.

Keppel A.C. Creswell connects the design of the Dome of the Rock directly to three Byzantine buildings. The first, no longer extant, is the cathedral of Bostra (512–513), whose structure was topped with a dome based on a tholobate supported by a row of columns and pillars. According to Creswell, the next stage of development of the structure of the central buildings can be Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, which was built in 327–335 AD. It is a building based on a circular plan with two arcades consisting of columns and pillars. These two constructions are linked by an arcade with pillars interweaving with columns and the proportions of a drum⁴⁶. The architectural concept of the Dome of the Rock was also influenced by the shape of the Chapel of Ascension on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem (before 378 AD). The chapel was built on an

lim pilgrimage, from Mecca to Jerusalem, since the cities of the Prophet were at that time in the hands of anti-caliph 'Abd al-Allāh az-Zubayr. E. Herzfeld, *The Genesis of Islamic Art and the Problem of Mshatta*, [in:] *Early Islamic Art and Architecture. The Formation of the Classical Islamic Worlds*, vol. XXIII, ed. J.M. Bloom, Aldershot Burlington 2002, p. 2. See also: A. Elad, *Why Did 'Abd al-Malik Build the Dome of the Rock? A Re-Examination of the Muslim Sources*, [in:] *Bayt al-Maqdis. Abd al-Malik's Jerusalem*, vol. I, eds. J. Raby, J. Jones, Oxford 1993, pp. 33–52; *Historia sztuki...*, p. 156.

⁴² K.A.C. Creswell, *The Origin of the Plan of the Dome of the Rock*, London 1924, p. 5.

⁴³ The Byzantines would give Al-Walid II many gold dinars for the construction of Al-Aḳṣā (705–712) and send 100 well-trained craftsmen and 40 shipments of mosaic pieces (*tessera*) to decorate the temple. R.W. Hamilton, *The Structural History of the Aqsa Mosque*, Jerusalem 1947; H. Stern, *Recherches sur la mosquée al-Aqsa et sur ses mosaïques*, AOr 5, 1963, pp. 28–48; V. Christides, *Periplus of the Byzantine-Arab Cultural Relations*, [in:] *Cultural Relations between Byzantium and the Arabs*, eds. Y.Y. Hiji, V. Christides, Athens 2007, p. 29.

⁴⁴ M. Pinker, *Kopula w architekturze arabsko-muzułmańskiej w pierwszych wiekach islamu*, Warszawa 2010, [unpublished MA thesis], p. 35; *Historia sztuki...*, p. 156.

⁴⁵ J. Pijoan, *Sztuka...*, p. 209. For information of the use of a dome in Muslim art see: O. Grabar, *The Islamic Dome*, JSAH 22, 1963, pp. 191–199.

⁴⁶ K.A.C. Creswell, *The Origin...*, pp. 26–27; *Historia sztuki...*, p. 156.

octagonal plan⁴⁷. Recapitulating his analysis of the genesis of the form of *Ḳubbat as-Ṣakhra*, the author made a simplified outline of its development:

- a circle inscribed in a circle (the Church of the Holy Sepulchre);
- a circle inscribed in an octagon (the Chapel of Ascension);
- a circle inscribed in an octagon, enclosed in a circle in a square (the Cathedral of Bosra);
- a circle inscribed in an octagon, enclosed in an octagon (the Dome of the Rock mosque)⁴⁸.

According to Marguerite van Berchem, who described the decorations of the Dome, the mosaics in *Ḳubbat as-Ṣakhra* were made by Christians and maintained in a Byzantine style⁴⁹. Their characteristic features are a golden background and the absence of any depictions of living creatures. Van Berchem classified and described the following motifs: leaves of acanthus and other plants, scrolls, trees, horns, shells, vases, baskets, bowls of fruit, crescents, stars, jewels, stylized wings, palm trees, conventionalised depictions of flowers, tangles, and palmettes (Fig. 1)⁵⁰.

Among all this abundance of varied forms, the most extraordinary elements are adornments such as crowns, bracelets, earrings, necklaces and breastplates. Depictions of jewellery appear almost exclusively on the interior of the octagonal colonnade – in the most important part of the building⁵¹. The gems presented in the ornamentation of the Dome of the Rock are all of Byzantine or Persian style⁵². Thus, they probably symbolise empires conquered by the Arabs. Oleg Grabar noted a similar manner of using such decorations, among others, in the Hagia Sophia church in Constantinople, where Byzantine rulers had once housed crowns⁵³. At the same time, Grabar pointed to a connection between this phenomenon and the Muslim tradition, under which an assortment of objects were sent to Mecca and laid in Al-Ka'ba⁵⁴. In this context there can be seen two possible explanations of placing images of jewels on the mosaics of the Dome of the Rock⁵⁵. According to one interpretation, crowns and other valuables are

⁴⁷ M. P i n k e r, *Kopula...*, p. 44.

⁴⁸ K.A.C. C r e s w e l l, *The Origin...*, pp. 29–30.

⁴⁹ M. v a n B e r c h e m, *The Mosaics of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem*, [in:] K.A.C. C r e s w e l l, *Early Muslim Architecture*, Oxford 1969, pp. 240, 321.

⁵⁰ K.A.C. C r e s w e l l, *Early Muslim Architecture...*, pp. 252–292.

⁵¹ O. G r a b a r, *Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem*, AOr 3, 1959, p. 47.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 48.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 49.

⁵⁴ M. P i n k e r, *Kopula...*, p. 46.

⁵⁵ O. G r a b a r, *Umayyad Dome...*, p. 52.

a reference to Byzantine and Muslim motifs and their aim is to emphasise the holiness of the place. The other account states that Byzantine and Sassanid insignia were used as a symbol of the acts of humility of the defeated rulers and their acknowledgement of Islam's superiority – they are a form of trophies captured from the enemies⁵⁶.

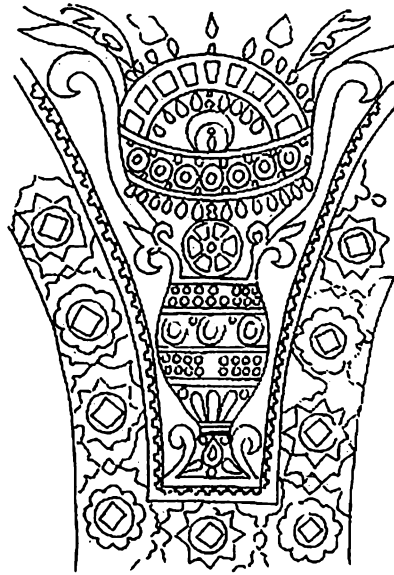


Fig. 1. A mosaic from the interior of the Dome of the Rock, created around 690–691 AD.

In the central part of the composition there is a depiction of a vase filled with plants (such as acanthus leaves) on a golden background. The whole arrangement is complemented by a geometric floral ornament on its edges (all copies in this chapter by Elżbieta Myślińska-Brzozowska).

This analysis of the decorations in the Dome of the Rock would not be complete without addressing the inscriptions on the interior. They occupy about 240 m – 128 m outside the building and 112 m inside it. They have been described by Max van Berchem⁵⁷. The inscriptions are one of the earliest examples of Arabic script. It is Kufic in style, mostly devoid of diacritical marks. Christel Kessler has proven that almost all letters with diacritical marks are situated on the interior of the arcade, in polemical texts directed against Christianity⁵⁸. They

⁵⁶ M. P i n k e r, *Kopuła...*, p. 46.

⁵⁷ M. v a n B e r c h e m, *Materiaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum. Memoires publies par les Membres de la Mission Archeologique Francaise au Caire*, Paris 1927, pp. 223–376.

⁵⁸ Ch. K e s s l e r, *Abd al-Malik's Inscription in the Dome of the Rock: A Reconsideration*, JRAS 102, 1970, p. 10.

could have been inspired by passages from the Gospel referring to salvation, which graced the Church of the Holy Sepulchre⁵⁹.

Oleg Grabar claimed that the inscriptions in the Dome of the Rock convey two main messages⁶⁰: evangelism, exhorting conversion to Islam and confirmation of the superiority of Islam over older religions, especially Christianity.

Having analysed the location, plan and decorations of the Dome of the Rock, the mentioned scholar concluded that the construction should be viewed with reference to two groups: People of the Book, which means followers of Judaism and Christianity, the two religions whose continuation was Islam and the Muslim people. *Ḳubbat as-Ṣakhra* was intended to be a symbol of the power of Islam and the Umayyads over Syria and Palestine. The choice of the Temple Mount was consistent with a centuries-old tradition of emphasising the status of Islam as having “sealed” the two preceding religions. The mosaics depicting the insignia of Byzantine and Persian rulers were to be symbols of their defeat in the battles against the Muslim army (although it could not be claimed that the Byzantine emperor was totally defeated by the Arabs). The inscriptions highlighted the basic rules of the new faith, in particular monotheism. Moreover, the selection of Ḳur’ānic quotations was anti-Christian in nature and pointed to the errors which the followers of this religion made in their doctrine (the key issue being the dogma of the Holy Trinity), as well as encouraging conversion to the only correct faith – Islam⁶¹.

A Christian building often compared to the Dome of the Rock is the Church of the Nativity, with its decorative mosaics. These depictions consist of floral and architectural motifs, images of altars, crosses and books, as well as inscriptions. Each of these elements is present in earlier-built churches of Syria and Palestine or in Byzantine iconography. We can highlight especially the motif of the grapevine; verdant shoots growing from decorated vases are a common feature of the Dome of the Rock and the Church of the Nativity. In fact, it is a part of a classic repertoire transferred to Christian art from the Mediterranean world, which can be exemplified by the church of St. George in Thessalonica. The motif of grapevine was commonly used in Egypt, Syria and Palestine in the fifth–sixth centuries, and later returned in Umayyad art, e.g. in the decorations of the Great Mosque of Damascus⁶².

⁵⁹ H. B u s s e, *The Temple of Jerusalem and Its Restitution by ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwan*, *JcAr* 23/24, 1997/1998, p. 28.

⁶⁰ O. G r a b a r, *Umayyad Dome...*, p. 55.

⁶¹ M. P i n k e r, *Kopula...*, p. 49.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 198.

The history of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus is particularly interesting – it was created in the years 706–715 on the site of the Roman-era Temple of Jupiter, rebuilt by emperor Theodosius the Great and converted into St. John's church in 379 AD⁶³. Umayyad caliph Al-Walid I transformed the Christian church into a Muslim temple in 691, but, in keeping with tradition, retained the relic of St. John the Baptist's head⁶⁴. As a result of its numerous alterations the mosque looks rather eclectic: it consists of a spacious rectangular yard, surrounded by porticos on three sides. The latter prove the Byzantine influence⁶⁵. In the southern part of the building there is a prayer hall with an elevated transept, which is perpendicular to the *Kibla* wall and three naves parallel to it. Today, a large dome stands above the centre of the transept⁶⁶. According to Al-Muḥaddasī, it used to be situated *in the middle opposite the mihrāb*⁶⁷. This account from the tenth century might suggest that the dome of the Damascus mosque was not initially located in the same place, but in the *mihrāb* section. An analysis of the plans of an assortment of mosques proves that domes were usually situated close to the prayer niche⁶⁸.

Prior to its destruction in 1983, the Great Mosque held the largest surface covered with gold mosaic – around 4000 square m. It decorated the outer elevation of the gallery (on the side of the yard) and its interior. The mosaics were also placed on the facade of the prayer hall (again on the side of the yard). They originated from the period of Umayyad foundation and later Seljuq reconstruction. The preserved fragments show a resemblance to Byzantine mosaics, known for example from the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, although some scholars claim that they are more closely related to Roman paintings in Pompeii⁶⁹. They do not depict human beings or animals, but contain coherent

⁶³ The history and architecture of the mosque have attracted scholars for a long time. Among earlier works the following are especially worth mentioning: A.C. Dickie, *The Great Mosque of the Omeiyades, Damascus*, PEQ 29, 1897, pp. 268–328; R. Phenè Spiers, *The Great Mosque of the Omeiyades, Damascus*, ArchRev 8, 1900, pp. 80–88, 103–114, 158–169; O. Grabar, *La grande mosquée de Damas et les origines architecturales de la mosquée*, [in:] *Synthronon. Art et archéologie de la fin de l'Antiquité et du Moyen Âge. Recueil d'études par A. Grabar et un groupe des ses disciples*, Paris 1968, pp. 107–114.

⁶⁴ J. Pijoan, *Sztuka...*, pp. 209–211. Apart from the "chapel", where the relic is located, there is also another, with the head of imam Al-Husayn, worshipped especially by Shiites. M.M. Dziekan, *Dzieje...*, p. 353; *Historia sztuki...*, p. 157.

⁶⁵ J. Pijoan, *Sztuka...*, p. 211; V. Christides, *Periplus...*, p. 29; *Historia sztuki...*, p. 157.

⁶⁶ M. Pinker, *Kopula...*, p. 64.

⁶⁷ Muḥaddasī, p. 157.

⁶⁸ M. Pinker, *Kopula...*, p. 63.

⁶⁹ M. al-Asad, *Historical Artistic Introduction*, [in:] *The Umayyads: The Rise...*, p. 49.

compositions of floral (Fig. 2) and architectural motifs – they create images of perfect cities and palaces surrounded by greenery. Both of the preserved fragments are based on a similar structure. In the lower panel water and fruit trees are depicted; above them there are groups of buildings with facades dominated by ancient columns⁷⁰.

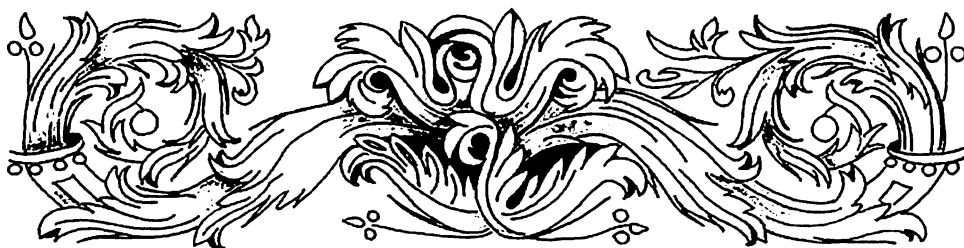


Fig. 2. The Great Mosque of the Umayyads in Damascus. This mosaic bears a developed floral ornament style from a period slightly exceeding the scope of this paper – the latter half of the eighth century – in which is continued the patterns created in the Umayyad era. It adorns the outer surface of the so-called Dome of the Treasury, a small construction, situated inside the courtyard of the Great Mosque. The building was created around 790, during the reign of the first Abbasids

The iconography of the mosque's mosaic causes interpretational problems. There are three theories regarding the question of its interpretation. It might depict Damascus in late antiquity together with the River Barada flowing through it; these scenes may be the cities which were included in the new empire; thirdly, states the last hypothesis, these images may present the Muslim paradise⁷¹. In any case, the exceedingly high level of artistry suggests that the mosaics were made by craftsmen brought from Constantinople⁷².

As can be concluded from these overviews, the decorations of temples from the period of the first caliphs, the Dome of the Rock and the Great Mosque of Damascus, often include decorative motifs such as acanthus and grapevine

⁷⁰ For more information on this subject, see: B. Finster, *Die Mosaiken der Umayyadenmoschee von Damaskus*, KO 7, 1972, pp. 83–136; F.B. Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus. Studies on the Makings of an Umayyad Visual Culture*, Leiden 2001; M. van Berchem, *The Mosaics of the Dome...*, pp. 324–372.

⁷¹ Ł. Piątak, *Architektura Wielkiego Meczetu Umajjadów w Damaszku*, [in:] *Azja i Afryka: inność – odmienność – różnorodność*, eds. P. Bachtin, M. Klimiuk, Warszawa 2014, pp. 55–56.

⁷² M. al-Asad, *Historical Artistic...*, p. 49.

leaves, which appeared from late Antiquity in both Christian and in pagan temples⁷³. K. Łyszcz states that the preserved fragments of mosaics in the Damascus mosque contain depictions of landscapes and architecture, remaining in the circle of Hellenistic tradition⁷⁴.

6.4. “Desert Castles” as an Example of Umayyad Secular Architecture

In the first centuries of Islam Muslims built mosques, palaces and strongholds, drawing mainly on Christian and Persian architectural patterns. The best-known constructions are the so-called “desert castles” (*kaṣr*), which, in contrast to the common meaning of the word, were also buildings of non-military character, serving caliphs as seasonal residences. The majority of them fell into ruin, and their poor state of repair complicates research. Additional problems result from the unstable political situation in the region. Other difficulties are connected with the uneven distribution of this kind of monument in the Islamic world⁷⁵. Their analysis can thus be based on archaeological research and studies of historical accounts. However, we should not underestimate the efforts of the French Institute of the Near East in Beirut, under whose aegis a monumental monograph on the subject of the constructions in question has recently been published⁷⁶.

There are numerous theories concerning the reasons for building these desert residences. They played the role of caravansaries, providing travellers with an opportunity to rest and replenish their water supplies. They were regarded as the meeting places of the rulers and local Arabic tribes, and so also had a political function⁷⁷. K.A.C. Creswell, a famous English researcher of Muslim architecture compared them to Roman villas and perceived them as a sign of the Umayyad

⁷³ N. Rabbat, *Umayyad Architecture: A Spectacular Intra-Cultural Synthesis in Bilad al-Sham*, [in:] *Residences, Castles, Settlements. Transformation Processes from Late Antiquity to Early Islam in Bilad al-Sham, Proceedings of the International Conference held at Damascus, 5–9 November 2006*, eds. K. Bartl, A. Al-Razzaq Moaz, n.p. 2009, pp. 13–18.

⁷⁴ K. Łyszcz, *Malarstwo...*, p. 15

⁷⁵ They were usually built on fertile soils in the East from Damascus. At the same time pilgrimage trails and trade routes were also taken into account. A. Ballian, *Country Estates...*, p. 203; J. Sauvaget, *Châteaux umayyades de Syrie. Contribution à l'étude de la colonisation arabe aux I^{er} et II^e siècles de l'Hégire*, REI 35, 1967, pp. 1–49.

⁷⁶ D. Genequand, *Les établissements des élites omeyyades en Palmyrène et au Proche Orient*, Beyrouth 2012.

⁷⁷ There is epigraphic evidence that palaces replaced monasteries as a meeting place for tribes inhabiting the desert. A. Ballian, *Country Estates...*, pp. 203–204.

caliphs' preference for desert lifestyle⁷⁸. On the other hand, a French historian and orientalist Jean Sauvaget claimed that they were not only places of entertainment and rest, but also agricultural centres. The irrigation systems, canals and aqueducts, apart from supplying palaces with water, irrigated fields in their surroundings⁷⁹. Denis Genequand emphasised the political and economical aspects of the workings of "desert castles", describing each of them in detail⁸⁰. Desert palaces were surrounded by gardens that substituted for farmlands, for example in *Ḳaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Sharḳī*⁸¹, whose layout might have referred to the images of paradise⁸².

Many of these constructions were built in haste, using materials of low quality. A simple square plan with towers in the corners was dominant; later rectangular layout was introduced⁸³. They differed in size: *Ḳaṣr Kharāna* was 40 m long and 40 m wide, while the complex in 'Andjar was 400 m long and 320 m wide⁸⁴. Rulers wanted to complete the construction of their quarters as soon as possible, at the beginning of their reign: thus they often demolished their predecessors' buildings in order to demonstrate their domination. What is more, the dismantled structures were a perfect source of building materials for new constructions⁸⁵.

Arabic documents mentioning castles are relatively late, written down either by enemies of the Umayyads or by their successors, the Abbasids, who tried to tarnish the reputation of the first Muslim dynasty. That is the reason why Abbasid literature often depicted Al-Walid II as a drunken philanderer and a *bon vivant*, who led a pleasant life in his desert residence. Other Umayyads were accused of ignoring the rules of Islam and striving for wealth⁸⁶. It was believed that the glory of kings became evil when it was transferred to architecture. Lavish buildings created by the Umayyad rulers were supposed to have been constructed at the cost of their subjects⁸⁷.

⁷⁸ K.A.C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture...*, p. 409.

⁷⁹ O. Grabar, *Umayyad "Palace" and Abbasid "Revolution"*, *StI* 18, 1963, pp. 7–8.

⁸⁰ D. Genequand, *Les établissements...*, *passim* (mainly pp. 379–395).

⁸¹ The basic analysis of *Ḳaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Sharḳī*: D. Genequand, *Les établissements...*, pp. 95–159. Also compare: D.M. Schlumberger, *Les fouilles de Ḳaṣr-el-Heir el-Gharbi (1936–1938). Rapport préliminaire*, *Sy* 20.4, 1939, pp. 195–373; *idem*, *Deux fresques omeyyades*, *Sy* 25, 1946, pp. 86–102.

⁸² M. Pinker, *Kopula...*, p. 52.

⁸³ *Historia sztuki...*, p. 157; H. Stern, *Notes sur l'architecture des châteaux Omeyyades*, *AIsl* 11/12, 1946, pp. 72–97.

⁸⁴ M.M. Dziekan, *Dzieje...*, p. 362.

⁸⁵ M. Pinker, *Kopula...*, p. 49.

⁸⁶ A. Ballian, *Country Estates...*, p. 200.

⁸⁷ O. Grabar, *From Dome of Heaven to Pleasure Dome*, *JSHA* 49, 1990, p. 21.

Out of a dozen or so buildings dated to the Umayyad times, the best preserved are worth mentioning: *Khirbat al-Minja*, *Qaṣr 'Amra*, *Qaṣr al-Hayr ash-Sharqi*, *Khirbat al-Mafdjar*, and *Mshattā* (also known by the name of *Mshattā*)⁸⁸. In many there are elements depicting landscapes and architecture. This can be observed in the extant ruins that have been discovered on the border between Syria and Jordan, e.g. in *Qaṣr al-Hayr* or *Mshattā*⁸⁹.

The best-preserved desert palace is *Qaṣr 'Amra* in Jordan, discovered by Alois Musil in June 1898⁹⁰. It is a relatively small construction, consisting of two main parts. One of them is a large basilican hall covered with a triple-barrel vault and surrounded by two rooms with windowless apses. Another part is a bath consisting of three rooms, one of which is topped with a barrel vault, the second, a cross vault and the third, a dome and two semi-domes. It must be emphasised that in desert conditions a bath is one of the clearest signs of luxury⁹¹.



Fig. 3. Wall painting from a presence chamber in the desert palace in *Qaṣr 'Amra* from the first half of the eighth century, depicting a woman with bare breasts
An example of figurative art from the Umayyad period

⁸⁸ O. Grabar, *Umayyad Palaces Reconsidered*, AOr 23, 1993, p. 93.

⁸⁹ K. Łyszczyk, *Malarstwo...*, p. 15; R. Hillenbrand, *Islamic Art at the Crossroads. East Versus West at Mshatta*, [in:] *Essays in Islamic Art and Architecture in Honor of Katharina Otto-Dorn*, ed. A. Daneshvari, Malibu 1981, pp. 63–86.

⁹⁰ A. Musil, *Kusejr Amra*, Vienna 1907; K.A.C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture...*, p. 253; A. Jaussen, R. Savignac, *Mission archeologique en Arabie*, vol. III, Paris 1922; M. Almagro et al., *Qusayr Amra*, Madrid 1975.

⁹¹ J. Pijoan, *Sztuka...*, p. 211; M. Pinker, *Kopula...*, p. 53; *Historia sztuki...*, p. 160.

The *Ḳaṣr 'Amra* Palace is famous for extraordinary and relatively well-preserved wall paintings. They originate from the first half of the eighth century and depict the so-called “six kings”, musicians, young men, women with bare breasts and other naked figures in a very realistic way (Fig. 3)⁹². All the frescos reference the Hellenist art of Syria⁹³. Figurative depictions were created without any major limitations, which can be proven by artefacts from this period, which show people, animals and even mythical creatures.

The dome in *Ḳaṣr 'Amra* is the only one preserved in Umayyad palaces. With its depictions of constellations, it referred to the so-called “heavenly domes” – a motif known from antiquity. Undoubtedly, this theme was drawn from the art of earlier inhabitants of Syria and Palestine, i.e. Romans and Byzantines⁹⁴. Fritz Saxl, an Austrian art historian, claims that the painter who created this work must have copied the image of the sky from a Greek book, since the position of the constellations are not consistent with the arrangement seen by observers in the sky, but it is rather its mirror image, seen by God⁹⁵.

A very impressive – twelve times the size of other buildings of its kind⁹⁶ – unfinished palace in *Mshattā* (Fig. 4) was probably also topped with a dome. This structure was independently discovered by two researchers – Austen Henry Layard in 1840 and Henry Baker Tristram in 1872⁹⁷. The grounds of the palace are surrounded by a wall, 147 m on each side. It is flanked by twenty-five towers; the interior is divided into three parts. The central part consists of an entrance hall, barely preserved, which continues into a spacious courtyard. In the north wing of the palace there is a basilican throne hall, above which the dome was probably mounted. Assuming that it was hemispherical, we can suppose that it rose up to 13 m⁹⁸. Presumably, it was surrounded by three semi-domes⁹⁹.

Irving Lavin linked the dome room in *Mshattā* with the Latin current of *tricorium* – a room with three apses¹⁰⁰. He claimed that the Umayyad construction

⁹² J. Pijoan, *Sztuka...*, p. 211. On the subject of nudity in depictions of *Ḳaṣr 'Amra* see: G. Fowden, *Qusayr 'Amra. Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria*, Berkeley–Los Angeles–London 2004, pp. 57–64; O. Grabar, *The Six Kings at Qusayr Amrah*, AOr 1, 1954, pp. 185–187.

⁹³ K.A.C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture...*, p. 268; *Historia sztuki...*, p. 160.

⁹⁴ J. Pijoan, *Sztuka...*, p. 211; M. Pinker, *Kopuła...*, p. 55; *Historia sztuki...*, p. 160.

⁹⁵ F. Saxl, *The Zodiac of Qusayr Amra*, [in:] K.A.C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture...*, pp. 289–295.

⁹⁶ A. Ballian, *Ḳaṣr al-Mshatta*, [in:] *Byzantium and Islam...*, pp. 209–211.

⁹⁷ K.A.C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture...*, p. 350.

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 359; J. Pijoan, *Sztuka...*, p. 212.

⁹⁹ M. Pinker, *Kopuła...*, p. 56; *Historia sztuki...*, pp. 160–161.

¹⁰⁰ I. Lavin, *The House of the Lord: Aspects of the Role of Palace Triclinia in the Architecture of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ArtB 44, 1962, p. 3.

is an *epigone of the local Syrian tradition* drawn directly from the Byzantines¹⁰¹. Three small domes were probably also located above the rooms in towers, which reached beyond the wall in the throne part of the palace. It is possible that latrines were situated in these towers¹⁰² – it is suggested by particularly bored stones¹⁰³.



Fig. 4. A stone relief gracing the facade of the desert palace in *Mshattā*, made in the 5. decade of the eighth century. One of many masterful, low-carved elements, whose purpose was to decorate the outside surface of the walls in caliph Al-Walid II's residence. Its characteristic feature is elaborate ornamentation, consisting mostly of floral motifs – acanthus leaves and grapevine sprouts. Sometimes images of animals, including various birds, lions and mythical creatures appeared on the facade of the palace.

Another non-preserved dome may have graced the *Khirbat al-Mafjar* palace, also called Hishām palace¹⁰⁴. It would most likely have been located above the bath complex. The same kind of vault was built over a small room attached to the pool¹⁰⁵.

It is worth emphasising that the dome¹⁰⁶, whose form had been known for centuries to builders from Persia, Rome and Byzantium, and its shape – reflecting the symbolism of the sky, power and divinity – became distinctive features of Islamic architecture and its indispensable component. The earliest Muslim palaces, from the period of the Umayyads, were strongly influenced by the architecture of Rome and Byzantium. In the process of their construction, the Arabs adopted not only their predecessors' form of a dome but also the additional meaning ascribed to it. Therefore, Arabic-Muslim architecture contains the heavenly symbolism of domes (*Qaṣr 'Amra*) and the symbolism of power (the throne hall in *Mshattā*)¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

¹⁰² K.A.C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture...*, pp. 355, 359.

¹⁰³ M. P i n k e r, *Kopula...*, p. 57.

¹⁰⁴ R.W. Hamilton, *Khirbat al Maffar*, Oxford 1959; H.G. Franz, *Das Omayyaden-schloss von Khirbat al-Maffar*, FF 30, 1956, pp. 298–305.

¹⁰⁵ R. Ettinghausen, O. Grabar, M. Jenkins-Madina, *Sztuka...*, p. 39.

¹⁰⁶ It is impossible to define the date of creation of the first building with a dome. It is estimated that the earliest of them were built at the end of the fourth millennium BC in the Near East. M. P i n k e r, *Kopula...*, p. 11.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 61.

6.5. Decorative Art in the Time of the Umayyads

Umayyad decorative art, realised in products of handicraft (metalwork, weaving, pottery and ivory work) is even more difficult to research than architecture. Many objects were produced in the same way as before the emergence of Islam, thus the majority of them cannot be dated properly, if found outside the original context. It is difficult to identify whether a particular item is of Umayyad, Byzantine, Sassanid or Coptic origin. In the Umayyad epoch these so-called “minor arts” played a secondary role compared to mosaics, architecture and sculpture: all integral parts of architectural constructions.

As it has already been mentioned, figurative depictions did not appear in the context of cult. They were eliminated from the mainstream of the Muslim civilization and allowed to exist only on the periphery of it. The Arabs compensated for this lack by developing incredible abilities to create ornaments¹⁰⁸ on wood and plaster panels, tiles on walls and fired-clay mosaics. They drew inspiration from the world of plants – motifs of leaves, flowers and braches were stylised to such an extent that they became difficult to recognise. Overlapping geometrical patterns, rhombuses and polygonal figures covered whole surfaces¹⁰⁹.

One field allowing artists to escape from religious limitations was handicraft. Various materials, such as wood, clay, metal, glass, fabric and paper, were utilised. In pottery, methods of glazing were various, for example, the production of polychromed vases¹¹⁰. Wondrous glass products were decorated with gold and colourful enamel and in metalwork; bronze was encrusted with silver and copper. Fabrics and carpets with geometric, animal and anthropomorphic patterns of the highest quality were made¹¹¹. However, in accordance with the one restriction, depictions of humans and animals could not dominate over other floral or geometric elements.

Reliefs were a rarity. When they appeared on sculptures and statues, they were usually nearly flat. It is worth referring to an example of such decorations in 'Andjar and *Ḳaṣr Kharāna*, which we have previously mentioned. 'Andjar

¹⁰⁸ K. Estreicher, *Historia sztuki...*, p. 226; J. Pijoan, *Sztuka...*, p. 240. On the subject of ornamental motifs in the art of early Islam see: M. Moraitou, *Ornamental Motifs in Early Islamic Art*, [in:] *Byzantium and Islam...*, p. 223–229.

¹⁰⁹ K. Estreicher, *Historia sztuki...*, pp. 226–228; J. Pijoan, *Sztuka...*, p. 240.

¹¹⁰ F. Robinson, *Islam...*, pp. 204–205.

¹¹¹ K. Estreicher, *Historia sztuki...*, pp. 226–228; J. Pijoan, *Sztuka...*, p. 240; J. Binous, M. Hawari, M. Marin, G. Öneg, *Islamic Art in the Mediterranean...*, p. 17; F. Robinson, *Islam...*, pp. 206–209.

(in today's eastern Lebanon) is an Umayyad architectural complex, erected on the basis of Byzantine patterns. Its decorations were carved in stone: ornaments joining arcaded windows, stylised acanthus, heads in niches surrounded by plants. The methods of carving were various – sometimes smooth and flat, at other times deeper and more detailed¹¹². Another technique consisted of using casting molds: some casts survived in, among other places, *Ḳaṣr Kharana*, dated on the basis of graffiti to the years 661–684. The upper part of the facade and walls of the rooms were decorated with stuccos in the shape of medallions and stylised trees resembling Sassanid artefacts¹¹³.

In no other field is the connection between Byzantine and Muslim trends so visible as in material culture. In the first decades after the conquest, items which were produced and traded did not differ much from those from before the Arab invasion. A sufficient example of this might be glass vessels, such as the decorated jugs used by Muslim, Christian and Jewish pilgrims, or clay lamps decorated with crosses and inscriptions – either Arabic or Greek¹¹⁴.

6.6. Coins

The Muslim monetary system from the Umayyad epoch went through three phases of development. The first lasted from 692 to 694 AD and was characterised by the use of images of emperors and religious symbols borrowed from the Byzantines and Sassanids. The second stage (694–697) was a time of depicting so-called standing caliphs in Sassanid robes. The third phase, from 697 until the end of the rule of the Umayyads in 750 was a period of minting coins with Arabic religious inscriptions¹¹⁵.

In the occupied areas Arabic conquerors encountered two fully-functioning monetary systems – Byzantine and Sassanid. In Byzantium gold denominated big transactions, while in small ones, copper coins were used. Byzantine coinage remained in circulation for many years after the Muslim conquest – copper coins until 658, gold until 696. Coins minted on the orders of the Umayyad rulers bore the symbol of a cross for a long time – probably to avoid causing displeasure

¹¹² R. Taḷgām, *The Stylistic Origins...*, pp. 37–39.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 39.

¹¹⁴ A. Ballian, *Country Estates...*, p. 205.

¹¹⁵ M.L. Bates, *The Coinage of Syria under the Umayyads, 692–750 AD*, [in:] *The IV International Conference on the History of Bilād al-Shām during the Umayyad Period*, eds. M.A. Bakhit, R. Schick, Amman 1989, p. 196.

among Christians, who constituted the majority of the community of the region. When caliph Mu'āwiyā (661–680) did commission the minting of coins without the sign of a cross shortly after 660, they did not meet with much acceptance¹¹⁶.

Umayyad coins in the first period differed from Byzantine ones only in an inscription in Arabic stating the name of the mint and an affirmation that they were fit for use (*Ṣāliḥ* or *Tayyib*). In the course of time, they were replaced by coins depicting a caliph in standing pose on the obverse¹¹⁷. On the reverse there was the letter *M* (in the Byzantine system denoting the value 40) or a fragmentary cross from the emperor's solidus. Coins of this kind were a transitional form, being minted several years before Marwān's reform. *Folles* introduced by it differed significantly from the earlier coins, as the majority of them contained the *shahāda*, the Muslim profession of faith, on the obverse and reverse: *There is no god but God. Muḥammad is the messenger of God*. Some coins were decorated with pictures; others had a name of the governor who had commissioned the minting on the reverse, or the name of the mint.

On the other hand, in the Persian territories, the most commonly used were silver Arab-Sassanid coins known under the middle-Persian name *drachma* or *dirham*. They were usually decorated with a portrait of a Sassanid ruler with an inscription and an ornament; on the reverse side there was a Zoroastrian altar with sacrifices. The main difference between Sassanid and Arabic-Sassanid coins was the addition of an inscription in Arabic on the latter ones, although this is not an exact rule. The issue of the monetary system may be proof of the continuous nature of administrative and economic life in the early years of the Muslim reign on Persia¹¹⁸. On the orders of 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān (685–705), in Damascus, the minting of new gold and silver coins began to replace the previously used Byzantine coins. This most significant reform of the fifth caliph¹¹⁹ became the main cause of the war against the Byzantine emperor Justinian II, who refused to accept tribute from the Arabs paid in the new gold coins¹²⁰. Soon

¹¹⁶ C. Foss, *Arab-Byzantine Coins...*, p. 136.

¹¹⁷ Some researchers believe that on a number of coins an image of the Prophet was depicted. *Ibidem*, p. 137.

¹¹⁸ More about Arabic-Sassanid coins in: J. Walker, *A Catalogue of the Muhammadan Coins in the British Museum: A Catalogue of the Arab-Sassanian Coins. Umayyad Governors in the East, Arab-Ephthalites, 'Abbāsid Governors in Ṭabaristān and Bukhārā*, London 1941.

¹¹⁹ Ph. Grierson, *The Monetary Reforms of 'Abd al-Malik*, JESHO 3, 1960, pp. 241–264. The caliph reformed the administration, entrusting it to the Arabs and introducing Arabic as the official language. He also organized a mail service.

¹²⁰ M.L. Bates, *The Coinage of Syria...*, p. 202; C. Foss, *Arab-Byzantine Coins...*, p. 137.

Muslim currency gained its own iconography – decorations consisting of Arabic inscriptions¹²¹.

The openness of the Arabs and their willingness to learn from the conquered tribes were crucial for the spectacular development of the culture of the Muslim Empire in the first centuries of Islam. During the reign of the Umayyads the tradition which would be drawn on in the following centuries was shaped. On the other hand, some manifestations of artistic work which had been important in the seventh and eighth centuries, such as mosaics and figurative sculptures, lost their significance in the subsequent period. Robert Hillenbrand described Umayyad art as eclectic, experimental and propaganda. It was eclectic since it attracted artists from the Greco-Roman world, Mesopotamia, Iran and Central Asia to come to Syria; it was experimental because it produced combinations of forms and themes in an unprecedented way; and it was propaganda as many of its works promoted the power and greatness of the Umayyad Arabic-Muslim state and its caliphs.

A false image of rapid change alleged to have taken place in the Near East alongside the transfer of authority in this area from Byzantine to Muslim hands lingers on. In fact, the process of cultural transformation was gradual in nature and did not make a complete break with the previous tradition. Some of its elements survived under the new conditions. Large-scale Umayyad foundations did not start until 685, when caliph 'Abd al-Malik gained power. His reign had a fundamental impact on the Islamisation of the southern Mediterranean, although even he quite frequently deferred to Byzantine inventions and precedents. As Kazimierz Łyszcz highlighted in his article:

The dynamically developing new religion needed new iconographic forms, enabling the identification of its creators. In such a huge conglomerate of nations and cultures, various artistic traditions existed and the first caliphs, who possessed both religious and secular power, treated plastic arts in a rather liberal way. Since, in the first phase of the Muslim expansion the Arabs did not yet have their own artists, it seems obvious that, in the early decades, well-qualified Byzantine and Sassanid craftsmen were employed. They continued the patterns of late antiquity, early Christianity and Persia.¹²²

The result of their efforts was the utilisation of both Christian and pagan motifs (among others, Hellenist) in ornamentation, visible in the Great Mosque of Damascus and in desert palaces.

¹²¹ On the obverse it read: *There is no god other than God, no one can equal him*, on the reverse: *God is the only God, eternal and indivisible, who was not born and has no equal*.

¹²² K. Łyszcz, *Malarstwo...*, p. 15.

The oldest preserved Muslim palaces, dating back to the turn of the seventh and eighth centuries, demonstrate the adoption of Byzantine and Persian forms and solutions by the Arabs, as well as the liberal attitude of the Umayyads to depicting living beings (e.g. naked women from the frescos in *Ḳaṣr 'Amra*). The domes topping these palaces are also a continuation of ancient traditions, a reference to the symbolism of power and the practice of covering the most important places with this kind of vaults (throne hall in *Mshattā*, for example). Following the process of the adoption of this architectural form by Arabic builders, we need to stress the context of Syria and Palestine as a region, wherein newly-arrived conquerors from the Arabian Peninsula became an inherent part of a centuries-old tradition of constructing dome-topped buildings.

Religious rules prevented some types of depictions in the plastic arts of Islam from developing equally dynamically to others. Later attempts to overcome these restrictions contributed to a bloom of architecture and ornamentation connected to it. In great measure, the art and construction of early Islam were a continuation of Byzantine patterns, but also drew on other traditions. Moreover, they contained some added value – the principle of unity in multiplicity. Despite the lack of homogenous origins, the Arabs managed to give their art a coherent aesthetic form, using elements drawn from various civilizations. The tradition shaped in the seventh century still remains, especially in sacred architecture.



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Sources – a Brief Overview



MAREK M. DZIEKAN

A Short Review of Arab Sources

Byzantium bordered the areas of Arab culture, hence references to the Byzantine Empire can be found in a great variety of texts to which this culture gave birth. Primary sources on which we rely for studying the history of Byzantine-Arab relations are very heterogeneous. In addition to texts that are strictly historical in character (assuming there exist Muslim-Arab writings which actually deserve to be classified under this category), the corpus of the sources in question also includes literary works. The complexity of the corpus is clearly seen in the difficulty one encounters in trying to fit medieval Arab writings into western genre typology. The boundary between fiction and non-fiction literature is often fluid, and a similar problem appears when one attempts to draw a distinction between religious and secular texts. Of course, all of this does not prevent us from

attempting to classify this material. However, none of those classifications can be regarded as entirely successful.

An attempt to characterize and classify Arab sources from the perspective of our knowledge of Byzantium was made by Nadia Maria El Cheikh in the preface to her work *Byzantium viewed by the Arabs*¹. The typology offered by the Lebanese scholar², although it should not be entirely rejected, needs to be supplemented. This concerns in the first place poetry which is entirely omitted from her account (as opposed to artistic prose)³.

The belief that it would be a mistake to exclude poetry from the discussion presented below is based on my own scholarly experience concerning the study of the history of Islamic civilization, as well as on the opinions held by other authors. Tadeusz Lewicki, a distinguished expert on the history of Islamic culture and its relations with the Slavs, also does not omit these kinds of texts from his work *Arabic Sources on the History of the Slavic Peoples*⁴. Lewicki analyzes a brief fragment of the Umayyad poet, Al-Akḥṭal. Indeed, many scholars consider it legitimate to treat fictional stories as historical sources. This very fact can be viewed as forming something of a methodological justification for the inclusion of poetic texts in the discussion of the Arab sources on the history of Byzantine-Arab relations. Needless to say, however, such sources require a specific approach and interpretation⁵. A literary work constitutes (or can constitute) a model of reality. As Jerzy Topolski writes: *to fill a model with fictional material essentially does not undermine the truth on the level of the class of facts reflecting important aspects of reality*⁶.

All works on the history of the Arabian Peninsula in the early medieval period start their overview of primary sources with a discussion of the old Arabic poetry called *dīwān al-ʿArab*, that is, the Arabs' archive. To this day, Arabists regard it as an important historical source⁷. However, one needs to admit that in

¹ N.M. El Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs*, Cambridge Mass. 2004, pp. 5–13.

² In this overview I decided to confine myself to the period prior to the Crusades that significantly changed the way in which Christians were perceived in the Islamic world. Sources concerning the epoch to which this monograph is devoted may contain – are even certain to contain – a different vision of intercultural contacts.

³ N.M. El Cheikh discusses poetry in the entry: *Rūm*, [in:] *El*, vol. VIII, pp. 601–606.

⁴ *Źródła arabskie do dziejów Słowiańszczyzny*, ed. T. Lewicki, vol. I, Wrocław–Kraków 1956, pp. 3–9 (along with detailed commentary).

⁵ J. Wojciechowski, *Powieść historyczna w świadomości potocznej. Zarys problematyki*, Kraków 1989, p. 102.

⁶ J. Topolski, *Problemy metodologiczne korzystania ze źródeł literackich w badaniu historycznym*, [in:] *Dzieło literackie jako źródło historyczne*, ed. Z. Stefanowska, Warszawa 1978, p. 15.

⁷ Among fundamental works concerning the history of the Muslim-Arab historiography one needs to mention: F. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, Leiden 1952;

our case old Arabic poetry is of little use. The only conclusion to be drawn from it with regard to Byzantium is that in the pre-Muslim period the Arabs did not treat it as a foreign state. The Empire is mentioned in poems by Imru Al-Qays (died around 540), by Al-A'shā, who is known for his travels (sixth–seventh centuries), and by 'Amr ibn Qamī'a (448–540). References to Byzantium are also found in the Prophet's most famous panegyrist, Ḥassān ibn Tābit. However, these references, as I have mentioned, are not very rich in content and, as such, can be referred to as “signals”. A phrase derived from a description of a mount offered by Ṭarafah ibn al-'Abd can serve here as a good example: *it is just like the bridge of Rum who has just vowed to reinforce all of its walls with bricks*⁸. Aṣ-Ṣalt (sixth–seventh centuries), father of the well-known poet, Umayyah ibn Abī aṣ-Ṣalt, in turn, in describing a man, says that the *man is more generous than Emperor Heraclius*⁹.

The Qur'ān and Sunnah, that is, the Prophet's tradition, form another corpus of the texts that concern us here. The Byzantines appear in the Qur'ān twice, first in the verses 2 to 4 in the Sūra 30, which, revealed in 616, even bears the title *Ar-Rūm* (*The Romans*, i.e. *The Byzantines*) and second in the Sūra 3, entitled *Imran's Family* (*Āl 'Imrān*) and revealed around 624 (verse 64). I shall return to this fragment later.

Sunnah, which is also called “tradition”, forms a theory and practice of the Muslim orthodoxy¹⁰. It is made up of ḥadīths, that is, tales reporting the teachings, deeds, and sayings of the Islamic prophet, Muḥammad. Each of the ḥadīths contains a chain of narrators (*isnād*) and the text proper (*matn*). Sunnah began to be recorded in the eighth century, that is, in the period in which most of those who remembered the Prophet and thus could actually report his words were no longer alive. The main texts of the Islamic tradition were then brought

T. Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, Cambridge 1994; F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, vol. I, Leiden 1967 (respective chapters); A.A. Duri, *The Rise of Historical Writing among the Arabs*, Princeton 1983; idem, *Arabic Historiography*, [in:] *Culture and Learning in Islam*, ed. E. İhsanoğlu, Beirut 2003, pp. 487–510; H. Kennedy, *Wielkie arabskie podboje. Jak ekspansja islamu zmieniła świat*, transl. M. Wilk, Warszawa 2011, pp. 21–38. In Polish this issue is discussed in greatest detail by Józef Bielawski (*Klasyczna literatura arabska*, Warszawa 1995) and by the author of this contribution (*Dzieje kultury arabskiej*, Warszawa 2008).

⁸ *Poezja arabska. Wiek VI–XIII. Antologia*, ed. J. Danecki, Wrocław 1997, p. 50. The text was translated by J. Danecki and A. Witkowska.

⁹ Ṭabarī, *Tarikh* (ed. M.A.F. Ibrahim, vol. II, p. 147).

¹⁰ In Polish, a detailed discussion of the sunnah can be found in the work: K. Kościelnik, *Tradycja muzułmańska na tle akulturacji chrześcijańsko-islamskiej od VII do X w. Geneza, historia i znaczenie zapożyczeń nowotestamentowych w hadisach*, Kraków 2001.

into being. Most important are the two works entitled *Ṣaḥīḥ*, that is, the *proper (collection of tradition)* by Al-Bukhārī (810–870)¹¹ and by Muslim Ibn al-Ḥādjīd-jādī (817–874). These ḥadīths, apart from developing Qurʾānic motifs, add some new and significant elements to the Islamic image of Byzantium. This question was also dealt with elsewhere in this book, as was the issue of the commentary literature of which most important are the works by Abū Djaʿfar Muḥammad b. Djarīr al-Ṭabarī (died in 923).

As the dates of the authors' lives mentioned above suggest, most sources, with the exception of old Arabic poetry and the Qurʾān, come from the periods following the one on which we focus here. With regard to the times of the prophet, of the rightly-guided caliphs, or of the Umayyad dynasty, that is, at least to the latter half of the seventh century, one can hardly talk about any Arab historical literature, or about any form of Arab prose. Poetry was the only genre that flourished in the period. Holding special significance for the Arabs, it formed the quintessence of their culture. Prose, both artistic and quasi-scholarly, appeared as late as the ninth century. To be sure, the first historian, Wahb ibn Munabbih (died in 728), lived during the reign of the Umayyads, but his work does not survive. We are familiar only with those of its fragments which Al-Ṭabarī inserted in his own work.

Within the prose conventionally described as historical, it is possible to distinguish a few genres. The so-called *sīra*, that is, the lives of the Prophet are chronologically the oldest ones. Most famous among them is *Sīrah Rasūl Allāh*, that is, *Life of the Messenger of God* by Ibn Ishāq (died in 768). The original text does not survive and we have to rely on its translation by Ibn Hishām (died in 834). Bound up with Muḥammad's life are also the so-called *maghazi* (military conquests). However, these kinds of texts focus exclusively on the Prophet's deeds and, as such, contain no references to the Byzantine Empire.

Following the taxonomy introduced by Nadia Maria El Cheikh, it is advisable to offer a more detailed discussion of the so-called *futuḥ*. In western scholarship the term is usually translated as "conquests" (I dealt with this problem in the chapter *The Arabs before Islam – the Birth of the New Religion*). The *futuḥ* give an account of the Arab conquests of successive territories¹². Insofar as the relations between Byzantium and the Arabs are concerned, three works come to the fore: *Futuḥ al-Sha'm* (*The Conquest of Syria*) by Abū Ismāʿīl al-Azdī (the eight

¹¹ For detailed information about modern editions of the sources, discussed in this contribution see *Bibliography, Sources*.

¹² For more details see: L.I. Conrad, *Futuḥ*, [in:] *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, eds. J.S. Meisami, P. S. Tarkenton, vol. I, London–New York 1998, pp. 237–240.

century)¹³, *Futūḥ* (*Conquests*) by Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī (ninth/tenth centuries) and *Futūḥ Miṣr* (*The Conquest of Egypt*) by Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam (died in 870). Worthy of mention in our context is 'Awāna Ibn al-Ḥakam, whose work, too, touches upon the Arab conquests¹⁴. However, one needs to bear in mind the fact that these works are in part a compilation and amplification of earlier texts that have not been preserved to the present day. *Futūḥ al-buldān* by Al-Balādhurī which forms something of an encyclopedic compendium of the Arab conquests – organized in geographical order, from Syria to the east – is undoubtedly the most representative work of the genre in question. The work is treated as a turning point in the history of the genre – *futūḥ* that appeared later were nothing but mediocre compilations¹⁵.

Arab chronicles figure prominently among the sources on Byzantine-Arab relations. According to Nadia Maria El Cheikh, works that were brought into being prior to the end of the ninth century are particularly important, meaning here *Kitāb al-akhbār at-tiwāl* (*The Book of the Long Narratives*) by Abū Ḥanīfa ad-Dīnawarī (died in 895) and *Tārīkh* (*History*) by Al-Ya'kūbī (died in 897). Interested in the history of the outside world, these authors devoted much space to the Caliphate's neighbours: Byzantium and Iran.

However, there is no doubt that it is *Tārīkh ar-rusūl wa-al-mulūk* (*History of the Prophets and Kings*) of Al-Ṭabarī that remains the most important work of the Arab classical historiography. With its title usually shortened to *Tārīkh* (*History*), it deals with the history of the world from its creation to the author's days – its last record concerns 915. In writing this great compilation, Al-Ṭabarī drew on the work of some of his most distinguished predecessors, often abstaining from providing the source of his information. This, however, was common practice in the Middle Ages and cannot be considered to have typified the Arab authors only. Another author of this kind of "world history" is Ibn al-Athīr (died in 1233). His *Kitāb al-kāmil fī al-tārīkh* (*The Complete History*) is sometimes considered to be a continuation of the work by Al-Ṭabarī.

Al-Mas'ūdī (died in 956) is another historian who needs to be mentioned here, even though his work does not lend itself to simple categorization. *We owe much of our knowledge to this historico-geographical work. Entitled "Murūj adh-dhahab wa ma'ādin al-jawāhir" ("The Meadows of Gold") and replete with anecdotal and legendary material, it presents us with information on history,*

¹³ On this issue see also: S.A. M o u r a d, *On Early Islamic Historiography: Abū Ismā'il al-Azdī and His Futūḥ al-Shām*, JAOS 120.4, 2000, pp. 577–593.

¹⁴ Fragments of his works survive only in works by other authors. A.A. D u r i, *Arabic Historiography...*, p. 493.

¹⁵ L.I. C o n r a d, *Futūḥ...*, p. 239.

geography, legends, and anecdotes of the Muslim world in the tenth century – writes Józef Bielawski¹⁶. *The Meadows of Gold* is an abridged compilation prepared by Al-Mas'ūdī himself of his two other works, neither of which, however, survives. The Arab historian declares:

What led me to write this book of history regarding kings and prophets, their countries and their peoples, lost in the darkness of the past, was a desire to follow the example of sages and the learned. I wanted to save for the world that which remains worthy of mention, some specific, profound knowledge.¹⁷

In addition to chronicle writing, the Muslim world had a particular liking for what can be classified as biographical dictionaries. The multi-volume work by Ibn Sa'd (died in 845), entitled *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, that is, *The Book of the Major Classes (of the Prophet's Companions)*, gives an account of the lives of Muḥammad and his companions. Ranging in time to the author's days, it still remains a valuable historical source. Ibn Sa'd's work is one of the first to be included in the genre called *tabakat*, which literally means "classes".

Important biographical dictionaries were also written by Yākūt al-Ḥamawī (died in 1229) and Ibn Khallikān, the latter lived at the turn of the classical and post-classical era (died in 1282). Contrary to what its title suggests, the work by Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (died in 1071) *Tārīkh Baghdād (A History of Baghdad)* can also be considered to belong in the genre in question.

Descriptive geography, initially tied up with history, gradually separated itself from it. The first work that can be included under the category "geography" is *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-al-mamālik (The Book of Kingdoms and Roads)* Ibn Khurrahādhbih (died in 885)¹⁸. A special place among geographical sources is held by *Kitāb al-a'lāk an-nafāsa (The Book of Precious Necklace)*. Written by Ibn Rusta (tenth century), it contains the most detailed Arab description of Constantinople of the time.

The so-called *adab* literature, which significantly augmented the Arabs' knowledge of Byzantium, constitutes a phenomenon that is not easy to define¹⁹.

¹⁶ J. Bielawski, *Klasyczna literatura...*, p. 176.

¹⁷ Mas'ūdī, vol. I, p. 12.

¹⁸ Travel literature is omitted from this brief contribution. It came into being at a later period and reflected the situation that existed in Byzantium at that time. It pertained to the Umayyad era only to a very limited extent. Nevertheless, this kind of literature too contained some historical references.

¹⁹ The monograph by Janusz Danecki contains an excellent analysis of *adab* as a complex phenomenon: J. Danecki, *Literatura i kultura w imperium kalifów. Studium twórczości adabowej al-Mubarrada*, Warszawa 1982.

It seems to be best defined by the term “didactic entertainment”. Plain in form, it entertained the readers by providing them with knowledge of various topics. An *adab* work, without offering a chronological or a consistent exposition of a given problem, was usually made up of anecdotes, poems, or stories – sometimes completely made up and sometimes based on facts – that dealt with both serious and trifling issues. These works were thus in part literary and in part encyclopedic in nature. They can give us much information on both the history of Byzantium as well as on the situation that existed in the Empire during a given author’s life. However, culling it usually requires a lot of effort. Al-Djāhīz²⁰ (died around 969), Ibn ʿUtayba (died in 889), and Al-Mubarrad²¹ (died in 989) are among the most distinguished representatives of the genre under discussion.

The Byzantine motifs to be found in the poetry of the Umayyad period are dispersed. The same holds true for the pre-Muslim lyric. This literature simply signals that the Arabs were aware of the existence of the Byzantine Empire. In a more tangible way, Byzantium appears in works brought into being in the Abbasid period. However, these works contain references only to the period in which they were written – which is beyond the chronological scope of this contribution.

Reminiscences of the Umayyad epoch appear in folk literature, *Sīrat Amīr Ḥamza* (*Sīrat al-amīra Dāt al-Himma*). Created orally and disseminated throughout the Arab world, *Sīrats* are a form of chivalric romances. It is difficult to indicate the exact time of their appearance. The process of their formation continued for centuries. Still unstandardized, today *sīrats* can be found in various printed versions. The life of the title princess forms the pivot of *Sīrat Amīr Ḥamza*. It is placed against the background of historical events among which the Byzantine-Arab wars clearly stand out. However, *Sīrat* is not a historiographic text. It mixes facts with fiction, sometimes giving a true account of events and sometimes not. However, there is no doubt that this work, intended for a large audience, played a significant role in shaping the image of the Arab-Byzantine relations in the Caliphate’s society²².

In the above I presented a brief overview of the sources that can be used in the study of the Arab-Byzantine relations. Some of those sources are discussed at greater length in the chapter entitled *The Byzantines in the Context of the Qurʾān*. The chapter provides examples of particular sources, thus allowing the reader to

²⁰ In Poland the life and work of Al-Djāhīz is presented in works: K. Skarżyńska-Boczeńska, *Pochwała sztuki słowa. Al-Ġāhīz i jego teoria komunikacji*, Warszawa 2009; eadem, *Al-Ġāhīz and His Theory of Social Communication*, Warszawa 2010.

²¹ For comparison see: J. Danecki, *Literatura i kultura..., passim*.

²² For comparison see: D. Madeyska, *Historia i legenda w “Siracie Zat al-Himma”*, *POrient* 3, 1981, pp. 233–245; M. Canard, *Delhemma. Épopée arabe des guerres arabo-byzantines*, [in:] idem, *Byzance et les musulmans du Proche Orient*, London 1973, pp. 283–300.

obtain a better understanding of their specific character. In the chapter I also discuss some methodological problems typifying the research into the history of the Muslim world and stemming from a special character of these sources, some of which are held sacred. In my opinion, this issue is particularly important for scholars from western culture who, unlike Muslims, do not treat these texts as sacred. This factor often becomes an obstacle that turns out to be too difficult for Muslim scholars to overcome.



Greek, Syrian and Coptic Sources for the History of Byzantine-Arabic Relations in Sixth–Eighth Century

The present monograph covers a period of several centuries. The source base for Byzantine-Arabic relations is relatively abundant and diverse. It consists of historiographic and chronological texts, apocalyptic and hagiographical works, polemical and normative texts, military treatises, and inscriptions. It is also multilingual¹. Although for a Byzantinist it is the Greek sources² that play the leading role, Coptic, Armenian and Syrian³ texts are also important in our research. Their authors were usually Christians of various denominations (Orthodox, Monophysites and Nestorians), but sometimes also Jews and pagans. Moreover, due to the topical diversity of the monograph, the authors of particular chapters employ own source bases. For example, when writing about nomenclature and stereotypes of Arabs, it was necessary to refer to texts which are much older than the period that is the subject of our research, i.e. the classic Greek and Roman literature (works by Pliny the Elder⁴,

¹ The fact that all scholars studying Byzantine-Arabic relations face similar problems has been noted by: A. Cameron, *The Literary Sources for Byzantium and Early Islam*, [in:] *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam, VII^e–VIII^e siècles. Actes du Colloque international, Lyon–Maison de l'Orient Méditerranéen, Paris–Institut du Monde Arabe, 11–15 Septembre 1990*, eds. P. Canivet, J.-P. Rey-Coquais, Damas 1992, pp. 3–13.

² General information: O. Jurewicz, *Historia literatury bizantyńskiej. Zarys*, Wrocław 1984. More details about these authors in (alphabetic order) see: M.E. Colonna, *Gli storici bizantini dal IV al XV secolo*, vol. I, *Storici profani*, Napoli 1956.

³ General characteristics in: S.P. Brock, *A Brief Outline of Syriac Literature*, Kottayam 1997, p. 110sqq.

⁴ For information about the author and his works refer to: M. Beagon, *Roman Nature. The Thought of Pliny the Elder*, Oxford 1992; T. Murphy, *Pliny the Elder's Natural History. The Empire in the Encyclopedia*, Oxford 2004.

Strabo⁵ and Ammianus Marcellinus⁶, to name just a few), the Bible, with a special focus on the Old Testament and Joseph Flavius⁷. A detailed review of sources used in this book would require a separate monograph. For this reason, the overview of sources, will be limited to a general characteristics of particular types of sources, with more attention only to the texts are most important for the subject. The authors of particular chapters have supplemented our data with the characteristics of sources they used.

Among the historiographic sources there are both first-hand accounts and texts written during later periods, based on earlier works, which have been lost. This also applies to the sources concerning Byzantine-Arab relations before and during the conquest. The former category is represented by, among others, the most eminent chronicler of the sixth century, Procopius of Caesarea⁸, whose *History of the Wars*⁹ contains information on Justinian's policy regarding the Arabs and information about Arab allies in the service for the Empire. His account, describing the course of events at the end of sixth century was complemented by his followers – Agathias Scholasticus and Theophylact Simocatta¹⁰.

⁵ G. A u j a c, *Strabon et la science de son temps*, Paris 1966; *Strabone. Contributi allo studio della personalità e dell'opera*, vol. I–II, ed. F. P r o n t e r a, Perugia 1984–1986.

⁶ H. C i c h o c k a, *Ammianus Marcellinus a literatura grecka i rzymska*, M 29, 1974, pp. 289–306; I. L e w a n d o w s k i, *Historyk ginącego świata*, M 48, 1993, pp. 339–349; D. B r o d k a, *Ammianus Marcellinus. Studien zum Geschichtsdenken im vierten Jahrhundert n. Chr.*, Kraków 2009; *The Late Roman World and Its Historian: Interpreting Ammianus Marcellinus*, eds. J. W. D r i j v e r s, D. H u n t, London 1999.

⁷ We mean in particular his *Jewish Antiquities*. For Flavius Josephus and his works refer to: H. S t. J. T h a c k e r a y, *Josephus, the Man and the Historian*, New York 1929; H. S c h r e c k e n b e r g, *Bibliographie zu Flavius Josephus*, Leiden 1968 [=Leiden 1979]. Basic information about this image of the Arabs in Greek historiography is given by Michel Whitby (*Greek Historical Writing after Procopius: Variety and Vitality*, [in:] *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, vol. I, *Problems in the Literary Source Material*, eds. A. C a m e r o n, L. I. C o n r a d, New Jersey 1992, pp. 74–80).

⁸ There is vast literature on the subject of Procopius and his works. Here we quote only basic sources, in which a reader will find further references: A. C a m e r o n, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, London 1985; G. G r e a t r e x, *The Dates of Procopius Works*, GRBS 18, 1994, pp. 101–114; A. K a l d e l l i s, *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History, and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity*, Philadelphia 2004.

⁹ Full bibliographical record of each source quoted in this monograph can be found at the end of the book in *Bibliography*.

¹⁰ A. C a m e r o n, *Agathias*, Oxford 1967; O. J u r e w i c z, *Historia...*, pp. 44–45, 107–110; M. W h i t b y, *Greek Historical Writing...*, pp. 25–80, particularly pp. 30–38, 47–54; A. K a l d e l l i s, *The Historical and Religious Views of Agathias: A Reinterpretation*, B 69, 1999, pp. 206–252.

The history of Byzantium under the reign of Heraclius, especially his struggles with the Persians, is the topic of the writings of George of Pisidia¹¹. A great wealth of information on this subject can also be found in the chronicle of Joshua the Stylite¹².

The *Ecclesiastical History* by John of Ephesus is another important work for the studies of Byzantine-Arabic relations on the eve of the invasion. John, the resident of Amida, wrote his chronicle in the second half of the sixth century, and brought his narration up to the year 585¹³. Of the two initial parts of his work only fragments have been preserved in the writings of Dionysius of Tel Mahre and Michael the Syrian. However, the third part, which is essential from the point of view of this monograph, has survived, and provides us with an account of events from the second half of the sixth century. Since John was a Monophysite, he showed interest in his fellow believers – the Ghassānids, Arabic allies of Byzantium. We owe him valuable information concerning the measures taken up by the Japhnid family, who ruled the that, to defend Monophysitism, and their involvement to calm down the disputes inside that denomination. Other sources, such as lives of saints and hermits from Sinai and Syrian deserts, are an invaluable source of history of early Byzantine-Arab relations. Especially important are the texts by Cyril of Scythopolis¹⁴, Theodoret of Cyrus¹⁵, John Moschus¹⁶ and Anastasius the Sinaite¹⁷. Important but scattered informa-

¹¹ J. Howard-Johnston, *The Official History of Heraclius' Persian Campaign*, [in:] *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East*, ed. E. Dąbrowa, Kraków 1994, pp. 57–87.

¹² J.W. Watt, *Greek Historiography and the Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite*, [in:] *After Bardaisan Studies on Continuity and Change in Syriac Christianity in Honour of Professor Han. J.W. Drijvers*, eds. A.C. Klugkist, G.J. Reinink, Leuven 1999, pp. 317–327; idem, *Two Syriac Writers from the Reign of Anastasius: Philoxenus of Mabbug and Joshua the Stylite*, Ha 20, 2006, pp. 275–293.

¹³ To learn more about this subject see: R. Duval, *La littérature syriaque*, Paris 1907, pp. 362–363; J.J. van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus. A Monophysite Historian in Sixth-Century Byzantium*, Groningen 1995; P.G. Rahme, *Les écrivains syriaques*, [in:] *Sources syriaques. Nos sources. Arts et littérature syriaques*, n.p. 2005, pp. 196–197; H.G.B. Teule, *Syriac Historiography*, [in:] *ibidem*, pp. 329–330.

¹⁴ B. Ketterer, *Kyrillos von Skythopolis*, [in:] *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, vol. IV, Herzberg 1992, cols. 897–899.

¹⁵ T. Urbainczyk, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus: the Bishop and the Holy Man*, Ann Arbor 2002; K.-G. Wesseling, *Theodoret von Kyros*, [in:] *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, vol. XI, Herzberg 1996, cols. 936–957.

¹⁶ E. Trapp, *Johannes Moschos*, [in:] *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, vol. III, Herzberg 1992, pp. 491–492.

¹⁷ Apart from theological works signed with the name of Anastasius, there are three (A, B, C) corpora of stories about miracles (*Narrationes*). More on this subject can be found in:

tion about the Arabs can be found in *Ecclesiastical Histories* by Eusebius of Caesarea¹⁸, Philostorgius¹⁹, Socrates Scholasticus²⁰, Hermias Sozomen²¹, Evagrius Scholasticus²², and the *New history* by Zosimus²³.

Additional remarks can be found in the chronicle of John Malalas²⁴ and in the existing fragments of the works by John of Antioch²⁵. Strictly religious texts, such as Old Testament commentaries, in which a lot of attention was devoted to Ishmailites, are also important.

B. Flussin, *Démons et Sarrasins. L'auteur et le propos des Diégémata stériktika d'Anastase le Sinaïte*, TM 11, 1991, pp. 381–408; O. Jurewicz, *Historia...*, pp. 120–121; J. Haldon, *The Works of Anastasius of Sinai: A Key Source of the History of Seventh Century East Mediterranean Society and Belief*, [in:] *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, vol. I, *Problems in the Literary Source Material...*, pp. 107–149.

¹⁸ For more information on the subject of works of Ecclesiastical historians, see: G.E. Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories: Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret and Evagrius*, Paris 1977. On Eusebius of Caesarea see: H.J. Lawlor, *Eusebiana: Essays on the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea*, Oxford 1912; A. Louth, *Eusebius and the Birth of Church History*, [in:] *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, eds. F. Young, L. Ayres, A. Louth, Cambridge 2004; *Reconsidering Eusebius: Collected Papers on Literary, Historical, and Theological Issues*, eds. S. Inowlocki, Cl. Zamagni, Leiden 2011.

¹⁹ H. Leppin, *Heretical Historiography: Philostorgius*, StPatr 34, 2001, pp. 111–124; G. Marasco, *The Church Historians (II): Philostorgius and Gelasius of Cyzicus*, [in:] *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity. Fourth to Sixth Century AD*, ed. G. Marasco, Leiden–Boston 2003, pp. 257–288; *Philostorgio: Cultura, fede e politica in uno storico ecclesiastico del V secolo*, ed. G. Marasco, Roma 2005; *Philostorge et l'historiographie de l'Antiquité tardive / Philostorg im Kontext der spätantiken Geschichtsschreibung*, ed. D. Mayer, Stuttgart 2011.

²⁰ T. Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople – Historian of Church and State*, Ann Arbor 1997; H. Leppin, *The Church Historians: Socrates, Sozomenus, and Theodoretus*, [in:] *Greek and Roman Historiography...*, pp. 219–254; P. van Nuffelen, *Un héritage de paix et de piété. Étude sur les Histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et Sozomène*, Leuven 2005.

²¹ H. Leppin, *The Church Historians...*, pp. 219–254; P. van Nuffelen, *Un héritage...*, *passim*.

²² P. Allen, *Evagrius Scholasticus, the Church Historian*, Louvain 1981; H. Leppin, *Evagrius Scholasticus oder: Kirchengeschichte und Reichstreue*, Man 6, 2003, pp. 141–153.

²³ W.A. Goffart, *Zosimus: The First Historian of Rome's Fall*, AHR 76, 1971, pp. 412–441; J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Pagan Historiography and the Decline of the Empire*, [in:] *Greek and Roman Historiography...*, pp. 177–218.

²⁴ *Studies in John Malalas. Australian Association for Byzantine Studies*, ed. F. Jeffreys, Sydney 1990; eadem, *The Beginning of Byzantine Chronography. John Malalas*, [in:] *Greek and Roman Historiography...*, pp. 497–527; M. Whitby, *Greek Historical Writing...*, pp. 60–63.

²⁵ O. Jurewicz, *Historia...*, pp. 111–112; S. Panagiotis, *Untersuchungen zum Geschichtswerk des Johannes von Antiocheia*, Thessaloniki 1989; S. Mariev, *Neues zur "Johanneischen Frage"*, BZ 99, 2006, pp. 535–549.

Valuable information can be obtained from the chronicles of Zachariah Rhetor, Jacob of Edessa and Dionysius of Tel Mahre (ninth century)²⁶. The first of the author, a monk from Northern Mesopotamia, was writing the sixth century. Unfortunately, the original Greek text of his chronicle has not survived and we are only able to use the Syrian translation, prepared and completed by an anonymous writer named Pseudo-Zachariah. The original Syrian fragments encompass the years 481–569²⁷. Jacob of Edessa²⁸, born near Antioch, used *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius of Caesarea²⁹ completed and continued the narration up to 692³⁰. His edition covers the times of the Arab expansion in Persia and Byzantium. Dionysius of Tel Mahre, born at end of the eighth century in Edessa, was the author of a historical text, devoted to secular and ecclesiastical history, from the beginning of the reign of Emperor Maurice (582 AD) until the death of Theophilos (842)³¹. His work was frequently used by later authors, especially Michael the Syrian and Gregory Bar Hebraeus³², and partial reconstruction of the content is possible on the basis of the fragments preserved by those authors, particularly of Michael the Syrian. An attempt to reconstruct the original text of Dionysius has been made by Andrew Palmer (*Dionysius Reconstituted*, [in:] *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, Liverpool 1993, pp. 111–221).

²⁶ P.G. Rahme, *Les écrivains...*, p. 197; S. Brock, *Syriac Historical Writing*, [in:] *idem, Studies in Syriac Christianity. History, Literature and Theology*, Ashgate 1992, pp. 14–15; W. Witkowski, *Introduction*, [in:] *Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre Chronicle (known also as the Chronicle of Zuqnin)*, vol. III, ed., transl. *idem*, Liverpool 1996, p. XIVsqq.

²⁷ H.G.B. Teule, *Syriac...*, p. 329; P. Allen, *Zachariah Scholasticus and the Historia Ecclesiastica of Evagrius*, JTS 3, 1980, pp. 471–488; J. Rist, *Die sog. Kirchengeschichte des Zacharias Rhetor*, [in:] *Syriaca*, ed. M. Tamcke, Münster 2002, pp. 77–99; G. Greatrex, *Le Pseudo-Zachariae de Mythélène et l'historiographie syriaque au sixième siècle*, [in:] *L'Historiographie syriaque*, ed. M. Dubiè, Paris 2009, pp. 33–55.

²⁸ M. Starowieyski, *Słownik wczesnochrześcijańskiego piśmiennictwa Wschodu. Literatury arabska, armeńska, etiopska, gruzińska, koptyjska, syryjska*, Warszawa 1999, cols. 106–108; *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of His Day*, ed. R.B. ter Haar Romeny, Leiden–Boston 2008; S. Brock, *Syriac Historical...*, p. 8.

²⁹ A Syrian Hawhab, known as Eusebius wrote in Greek in the third century. P.G. Rahme, *Les écrivains...*, p. 196.

³⁰ H.G.B. Teule, *Syriac...*, pp. 330–331. Subsequent anonymous authors, students of Jacob, brought it up to the year 710 (P.G. Rahme, *Les écrivains...*, p. 197; M. Starowieyski, *Słownik...*, col. 108).

³¹ H.G.B. Teule, *Syriac...*, p. 332; A. Palmer, *Dionysius: Introduction*, [in:] *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, Liverpool 1993, pp. 85–104.

³² P.G. Rahme, *Les écrivains...*, p. 197; R. Duval, *La littérature...*, pp. 400–401, 408–411; D. Weltzcke, *Les trois grandes chroniques syro-orthodoxes des XII^e–XIII^e siècles*, [in:] *L'Historiographie syriaque...*, pp. 107–135.

The name of Dionysius (Pseudo-Dionysius) is also associated with the so-called *Zuqnin Chronicle*³³. Classic edition of the Syriac text was prepared by J.-B. Chabot (*Incerti auctoris Chronicon Pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum*, Paris 1927–1933 [=CSCO 91, 104, *Scriptores Syri*, 43, 53, ser. III, vol. I–II]). The author of the chronicle was most probably Joshua, a Syrian monk from Zuqnin monastery. The first three parts of his work are based on other sources, such as the accounts of Eusebius, Socrates Scholasticus and John of Ephesus³⁴. Part four contains a lot of information concerning Byzantine-Arabic relations, and internal affairs of the Caliphate. Although it is generally devoted to the events during the Abbasid era up to the year 775, which is significantly beyond the time scope of this monograph (apart from the short outline of the years from 587 to 715), it contains a great amount of valuable information of the Umayyad era. We have access to translations of this chronicle prepared by Amir Harraka (*The Chronicle of Zuqnin*, vol. III–IV, AD 488–775, Toronto 1999) and Witold Witakowski (*The Syriac Chronicle of Pseudo Dionysius of Tel Mahre (known as the Chronicle of Zuqnin)*, vol. III, Liverpool 1996)³⁵.

A text that is especially important for investigating the course of events connected with the Arab conquest of Egypt and the analysis of Arab policy in the conquered territories was written by John, bishop of Nikiu, a Coptic historiographer from the seventh century, an eyewitness to the Muslim invasion of this province. His *Chronicle of the world*, dating back to the mid-seventh century, was probably written in Greek, and some fragments, dealing exclusively with Egypt, were written in Coptic³⁶. Later on it was translated into Arabic and in 1602 into Ethiopian. It covers the history of the world from the times of Adam and Eve until the year 643. The narration, however, is missing several fragments, among others one particularly important part containing the account of the events of 610–640 AD, which is crucial for understanding of the first years of Arab expansion. Unfortunately, the source is not quoted in any of the Byzantine

³³ S. Brock, *Syriac Historical...*, pp. 10–13; M. Starowieyski, *Słownik...*, col. 53.

³⁴ H.G.B. Teule, *Syriac...*, p. 331; S. Brock, *Syriac Historical...*, pp. 5–7.

³⁵ A. Harrak, *La victoire arabo-musulmane selon le Chronique de Zuqnin (VIII^e siècle)*, [in:] *L'Historiographie syriaque...*, pp. 89–105.

³⁶ R.H. Charles, D. Litt, *Introduction*, [in:] *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu translated from Zotenberg's Ethiopic Text*, transl. *idem*, London–Oxford 1916, pp. IV–V; M. Rodinson, *Notes sur le texte de Jean de Nikiou*, [in:] *IV Congresso Internazionale di Studi Etiopici*, vol. II, ed. E. Cerulli, Roma 1974, pp. 127–137; J. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis. Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century*, Oxford 2010, p. 182.

texts, thus there is no possibility of reconstructing the missing fragments. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the original chronicle of John of Nikiu has been lost. There are only two manuscripts, one from the seventeenth century, and the other from the eighteenth century. These copies were based on different editions of the text³⁷. Nevertheless, the chronicle of John of Nikiu is an invaluable source for the study of the Arab conquest, the attitude of the local people to the invaders, Muslim policy towards the people of Egypt and the beginnings of the organisation of provinces. To understand the particular character of John's account it is necessary to study texts of other Coptic authors, among others, his successor to the bishopric, Mēnas of Nikiu³⁸. The first attempt at editing the chronicle of John of Nikiu was made by a French orientalist Hermann Zotenberg (*Chronique de Jean, évêque de Nikiou. Texte éthiopien*, Paris 1883). In 1916 the text was translated from French into English by Robert Henry Charles, who also corrected his predecessor's mistakes. Currently, a new translation of the chronicle is being prepared by Phil Booth from the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the Oxford University³⁹.

Another witness of the Arabic expansion was an Armenian chronicler, Sebeos, the author of the *History of Emperor Heraclius*, covering the period from the end of the fifth century until the second half of the seventh century. Not much is known about the life of the historiographer. He was a bishop, and he took part the Council of Dvin in 645 AD. He provided us with information about the Persian domination over Armenia and the wars between Byzantium and the Persians which directly preceded the Arabic expansion. The text, which continues up to the year 661, closes with the description of the first Arabic successes in the seventh century⁴⁰. This work is also important for another reason: although Sebeos did not

³⁷ More about John of Nikiu can be found in: A. Carile, *Giovanni di Nikius, cronista bizantino-copto del VII secolo*, FR 4, 1981, pp. 103–155; O. Jurewicz, *Historia...*, p. 111; P.M. Fraser, *John of Nikiou*, [in:] *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, ed. A.S. Atiya, New York 1991, pp. 1366–1367; R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, Princeton 1997, pp. 152–156; H. Suermann, *Koptische Texte zur arabischen Eroberung Ägyptens und der Umayyadenherrschaft*, JCopS 4, 2002, pp. 167–186; J. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis...*, pp. 181–189.

³⁸ The key works of Mēna are: *The Life of Isaac of Alexandria* and the *Martyrdom of Saint Macrobius* (transl. D. Bell, Piscataway 2009 [=1988]).

³⁹ The translation, entitled *The Chronicle of John of Nikiu: Ethiopic Text with Translation and Commentary*, is to be published in *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium. Series Aethiopica*.

⁴⁰ For information about Sebeos see: R.W. Thomson, *The Armenian Text*, [in:] *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, transl. idem, Liverpool 1999, pp. 31–78; *The Heritage of Armenian Literature. From the Sixth to the Eighteenth Century*, eds. A.J. Hacı-

share the religious views of the supporters of the Council of Chalcedon, he did not perceive Arabic invaders as liberators from their yoke.

In order to understand the reactions of the people of the invaded provinces to Arab conquest, it is necessary to analyse the apocalyptic literature: such texts as the account of a converted Jew (*Jacob's Doctrine*)⁴¹, the *Vision of Daniel* and the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Ephraem, Andrew the Fool and Pseudo-Athanasius. A particularly important place among them is occupied by the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius⁴², which has survived in several languages. It is ascribed to Methodius, the bishop of Patara. Its author lived in the seventh century and originated from a Syrian-Persian community and was an eyewitness to the Arabic invasion⁴³. The text was written at the end of that century, probably between 682–692, as a reaction to the policy of 'Abd Al-Malik and the Christians' conversion to Islam, which was a consequence of the pressure he exerted⁴⁴.

To the above list of sources we should add religious texts, such as homilies and letters of Sophronius, the patriarch of Jerusalem, which were written in the fourth decade of the seventh century⁴⁵ and the work of John Penkāyē. The latter text, although it aspires to being a chronicle, is closer to historical theology⁴⁶. There are also accounts of first disputes (real or fictional) between Muslims and Christians, and the correspondence attributed to Byzantine rulers, caliphs etc.

Hagiographic sources are a separate group; worth mentioning is a story of the sixty martyrs of Gaza (written before the eleventh century)⁴⁷, as well as

yan, G. Basmajian, E.S. Franchuk, N. Ouzounian, Detroit 2002, pp. 81–93; J. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis...*, p. 71sqq.

⁴¹ J. Flori, *L'Islam et la fin des temps. L'interprétation prophétique des invasions musulmanes dans la chrétienté médiévale*, Paris 2007, pp. 123–127.

⁴² The texts in known in Syrian, Latin and Greek versions, there is also an Old Church Slavonic translation. Further information about each of the versions can be found in the chapter: *Resistance, Passivity or Collaboration?*

⁴³ For information about the author and the time of creation see: M. Starowieyski, A. Tronina, *Apokalipsa Pseudo-Metodego. Wstęp i bibliografia*, [in:] *Apokryfy syryjskie*, ed. M. Starowieyski, Kraków 2011, pp. 200–208.

⁴⁴ G. Reinink, *Pseudo-Methodius und die Legende vom römischen Endkaiser*, [in:] *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, eds. W. Verbeke, D. Verhalst, A. Welkenhuysen, Leuven 1988, pp. 82–111; A. Cameron, *The Eastern Provinces in the 7th Century AD. Hellenism and the Emergence of Islam*, [in:] eadem, *Changing Cultures in Early Byzantium*, vol. IV, Aldershot 1996, p. 298.

⁴⁵ The most important are: *Christmas homily* from 634, *Easter homily* from 637 and synodical letter to patriarch Sergius. About the works by Sophronius see: O. Jurawicz, *Historia...*, pp. 115–116.

⁴⁶ M. Starowieyski, *Słownik...*, col. 114; H.G.B. Teule, *Syriac...*, pp. 341–342.

⁴⁷ The text is known in two versions. In the first one, the person who supports the soldiers is patriarch Sophronius, in the second one – Florent (*Legenda sancti Floriani et sociorum suorum*,

the lives of Eastern saints written by John of Ephesus⁴⁸, deeds of Saint Gregentius, the lives of Symeon the Stylite the Younger, sixty martyrs of Jerusalem and many others⁴⁹.

Valuable information about the invasion of the Arabs on Byzantine territory, and its direct consequences, was provided by later historians, among whom the most significant was, undoubtedly, Theophanes Confessor, the author of *Chronographia*⁵⁰. His text, a chronicle of world history from the beginning of the world until the year 813 and a continuation of the work by George Syncellus, is an example of a particular genre. The text by Theophanes is invaluable for learning about the so-called dark ages in the history of the Empire, when Byzantine historiography collapsed. In many cases we do not have other historiographic sources for the history of the seventh–eighth centuries than Theophanes' *Chronographia*. Moreover, the author devoted much attention to the expansion of Islam and Byzantine-Arab relations.

Another Byzantine text worth mentioning is *Historia syntomos* by Patriarch Nicephorus⁵¹, who lived between 758 and 829. Like Theophanes, Nicephorus

ed. H. Delehaye, AB 23, 1904, pp. 303–307). More on this subject see: D. Woods, *The Early Recension of the Passion of the 60 Martyrs of Gaza* (BHL 5672m), [in:] *The 60 Martyrs of Gaza and the Martyrdom of Bishop Sophronius of Jerusalem*, ARAM 15, 2003, pp. 144–150.

⁴⁸ R. Jabre-Mouwad, *Les sources de l'hagiographie syriaque*, [in:] *Sources syriaques...*, p. 317.

⁴⁹ G. Huxley, *The Sixty Martyrs of Jerusalem*, BMGS 16, 1977, pp. 369–374; O. Jurewicz, *Historia...*, pp. 74–75.

⁵⁰ The literature devoted to Theophanes and his works is vast. Worth mentioning, among others, are: A.S. Proudfoot, *The Sources of Theophanes for the Heraclian Dynasty*, B 44, 1974, pp. 367–439; C. Mango, *Who wrote the Chronicle of Theophanes?*, ZRVI 18, 1978, pp. 9–17; L.M. Whitby, *The Great Chronographer and Theophanes*, BMGS 8, 1982/1983, pp. 1–20; O. Jurewicz, *Historia...*, pp. 133–135; I. Rochow, *Byzanz im 8. Jahrhundert in der Sicht des Theophanes. Quellenkritisch-historischer Kommentar zu den Jahren 715–813*, Berlin 1991; J.N. Ljubarskij, *Concerning the Literary Technique of Theophanes the Confessor*, Bsl 56, 1995, pp. 317–322; C. Mango, *Introduction*, [in:] *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284–813*, eds. C. Mango, R. Scott, G. Greatrex, Oxford 1997, pp. XLIII–C; P. Yannopoulos, *Les vicissitudes historiques de la Chronique de Théophane*, B 70, 2000, pp. 527–553; idem, *Comme le dit Georges le Synelle ou, je pense, Théophane*, B 74, 2004, pp. 139–146; A. Kōmpa, *Zbieżność losów a zbieżność narracji. O strukturze i autorstwie "Chronografii" Teofanesa*, [in:] *Średniowieczna wizja świata. Jedność czy różnorodność*, eds. T. Wołoska, M.J. Leszka, Łódź 2009, pp. 146–155; Yannopoulos P., *Théophane de Sigriani le Confesseur (759–818). Un héros orthodoxe du second iconoclasme*, Bruxelles 2013; A. Kōmpa, *In search for the own words of George Syncellus and Theophanes the Confessor: The authorship of the Chronographia reconsidered* (forthcoming, TM, Paris 2015).

⁵¹ For information about the life and works of Nicephorus, see: P. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople: Ecclesiastical Policy and Image Worship in the Byzantine*

had aristocratic background, which let him obtain good education. In this way, he was able to make a career at court, in the imperial chancery, where he eventually attained the post of a secretary, like his father Theodore. Apart from numerous theological texts, he has also left some historiographic works, such as the aforementioned *Historia syntomos*, in which he described the history of the Empire from the death of Emperor Maurice (602) to the reign of Constantine V (70s of the eighth century).

Some extra information about Byzantine perception of the Arabs is included in *Chronikòn syntomos* by George the Monk, called Hamartolòs (the Sinner). We do not really know anything about the author. For his work, George Hamartolòs obtained information from the account of Theophanes the Confessor and patriarch Nicephorus, so most of fragments concerning the early period of the Arab conquest are exact copies of the information mentioned by both of the earlier authors. The original narrative of George Hamartolòs deals mostly with the relations from 813–842⁵².

While analysing the situation of former Byzantine territories under Muslim rule, we must refer to the texts which were made in the areas within this paper's scope of interest: in Armenia, Egypt, and Syria. The *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*⁵³ is important for learning about the Muslim rule in Egypt. This compilation is usually attributed to Severus, the bishop of Hermopolis, also called Severus ibn al-Muḳaffa'. He was born about 915 in so-called Old Cairo. Initially, he performed a clerical function (his secular name was Abū Bishr ibn al-Muḳaffa'). Then he became a monk and soon a bishop of Hermopolis in Thebaid, in Upper Egypt. This appointment took place either during the episcopacy of Theophanes (953–956) or Menas (956–975). Severus was one of the first Copts for whom Arabic became the first language.

Among later texts one should mention a work by Armenian historian Ghewond, the author of the *History of Caliphs*. It contains a lot of precious infor-

Empire, Oxford 1958, p. 548sq; O. Jurewicz, *Historia...*, pp. 135–137; E.A. Fisher, *Life of the Patriarch Nikephoros I of Constantinople*, [in:] *Byzantine Defenders of Images. Eight Saints' Lives in English Translation*, ed. A.M. Talbot, Washington 1998, pp. 25–142.

⁵² H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, München 1978, pp. 347–351; O. Jurewicz, *Historia...*, pp. 137–139; D. Afanogenov, *The Date of Georgios Monachos Reconsidered*, BZ 92, 1999, pp. 437–447; W. Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians*, Basingstoke 2013, p. 114.

⁵³ About the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* (arab. *Ta'rikh Batārikat al-Kanīṣah al-Misrīyah*), also called the *Lives of the Holy Church*, see: J. den Heijer, *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, [in:] *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, vol. IV, ed. A.S. Atiya, New York 1991, pp. 1238–1242; idem, *Coptic Historiography in the Fātimid, Ayyubid and Early Mamluk Periods*, McEn 2.1, 1996, pp. 67–98.

mation about Byzantine-Armenian relations and the attitude of the Armenians towards the imperial reign and *basileis* themselves⁵⁴. Also *Kitāb al-'Unwān* by Agapius, a Melkite bishop of Membij in Syria (tenth century) made an important contribution to the research on Byzantine-Arabic relations⁵⁵. However, the most important work was the chronicle by Michael the Syrian, a patriarch of the Jacobite Church between 1166 and 1199 AD⁵⁶. The chronicle is a classic example of general history, recounting events from the time of Adam up to the days of the author. Numerous copies of that paper show that it must have been very popular⁵⁷. What makes the chronicle valuable is the fact that it is based on sound, reliably quoted sources⁵⁸.

Apart from the sources written in Syriac or Coptic texts⁵⁹ of Christian authors written in Arabic are also important for research concerning Byzantine territories under Muslim reign. The most significant of them are the works by Elias of Nisibis (early eleventh century) and Gregory Bar Hebraeus (twelfth century)⁶⁰. The latter, active in the thirteenth century, left us various historical works, written in Syriac and in Arabic. He was interested in both ecclesiastical history and secular events. Similarly to Michael the Syrian, he based his account on earlier texts, employing Syrian, Persian and Arabic sources. Nestorian Elias of Nisibis, the archbishop of this city at the beginning of the eleventh century, wrote also in Syriac and Arabic⁶¹.

⁵⁴ About Ghewond and his work see: Z. Arzumanian, *Studies in Armenian Historiography. Bishop Sebēos, Gewond the Priest, Kirakos of Gandzak*, Philadelphia 1981, pp. 21–34; *The Heritage of Armenian Literature...*, pp. 140–160; J.-P. Mahé, *Le problème de l'authenticité et de la valeur de la Chronique de Gewond*, [in:] *Arménie et Byzance – histoire et culture*, Paris 1996, pp. 119–126; M. Starrowieyski, *Słownik...*, p. 142. The fundamental work on this subject is, unfortunately, not available in any of the major European languages: N. Akinian, *Ghewond er'ets' patmagir*, Vienna 1930.

⁵⁵ A.A. Vasiliev, *Introduction*, [in:] Agapius (Mahboud) de Mebidj, *Histoire universelle*, ed. A. Vasiliev, [in:] *PO 8/3*, Paris 1912, pp. 399–550.

⁵⁶ On this subject, among others: W. Wright, *A Short History of Syriac Literature*, London 1894, p. 250sq; R. Duvall, *La littérature syriaque...*, p. 196sq; J.B. Chabot, *Littérature syriaque*, Paris 1935, p. 125sq; H.G.B. Teule, *Syriac...*, pp. 332–335; S. Brock, *Syriac Historical...*, pp. 15–17.

⁵⁷ H.G.B. Teule, *Syriac...*, p. 334.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 334–335.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 326.

⁶⁰ W. Wright, *A Short History...*, pp. 268–281; H.G.B. Teule, *Syriac...*, p. 326; D. Weltzke, *Les trois grandes chroniques...*, pp. 123–131.

⁶¹ J.B. Chabot, *Littérature syriaque...*, p. 118sq; H.G.B. Teule, *Syriac...*, pp. 342–343; A. Borut, *La circulation des informations historiques entre les sources arabo-musulmanes et syriaques: Elié de Nisibe et ses sources*, [in:] *L'Historiographie syriaque...*, pp. 143–147.

Studies of the history of the Middle East would not be complete without reference to several anonymous Syrian chronicles⁶². The most important of them is *Chronicle up to 1234*, covering both ecclesiastical and secular history, from the beginning of the world until the years 1203–1204⁶³. We must also mention an anonymous Syrian source from the beginning of the eighth century (so-called *Chronicle up to 724*)⁶⁴, the *Nestorian Chronicle* (also referred to as *Chronicle of Seert*)⁶⁵ and a few other texts, which are traditionally named after the year when their narration stops (e.g. *Chronicle up to 819*, or *Chronicle of 846*)⁶⁶. Another important set of information can be obtained from Mozarabic works, first of all the *Chronicle up to 754*, known as *Continuatio Hispana*⁶⁷.

For understanding the attitude of the Byzantines to Islam, polemic works seem essential. The discussion with Islam was initiated by John of Damascus⁶⁸, and regarding his followers, an important role was played by Nicetas of Byzantium, Bartholomew of Edessa, Euthymius Zygabenus and Theodore Abū Qurra⁶⁹.

In order to understand the complicated religious situation on the territories of Syria, Palestine and Egypt, it is essential to analyse conciliar and synodical acts, correspondence of important figures representing the Churches of the area, and normative sources. This is the reason for numerous references made in this paper to *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, published by E. Schwartz. For our study, the mentioned above works by Church historians proved to be of equal value. On the other hand, the research of Byzantine administration on the discussed

⁶² A. P a l m e r, *Les chroniques brèves syriaques*, [in:] *L'Historiographie syriaque...*, pp. 57–87.

⁶³ H.G.B. T e u l e, *Syriac...*, p. 337; S. B r o c k, *Syriac Historical...*, pp. 17–19.

⁶⁴ S. B r o c k, *Syriac Historical...*, p. 9; A. P a l m e r, *Une Chronique syriaque contemporaine de la conquête arabe. Essai d'interprétation théologique et politique*, [in:] *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam...*, pp. 31–46.

⁶⁵ H.G.B. T e u l e, *L'abrégé de la chronique ecclésiastique (Muhtašār al-abbār al-Bi'īyya) et la Chronique Séert. Quelques sondages*, [in:] *L'Historiographie syriaque...*, pp. 161–177; J.M. F i e y, *Ichô'dnah, métropolitain de Basra, et son œuvre*, OS 11, 1966, pp. 431–450; P. N a u t i n, *L'auteur de la Chronique de Séert: Išō'denah de Basra*, RHR 186.2, 1974, pp. 113–126; J.M. F i e y, *Ichodnah et la Chronique de Séert*, PO 6–7, 1975/1976, pp. 447–459.

⁶⁶ S. B r o c k, *Syriac Historical...*, p. 14; *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles, including Two Seventh-Century Syriac Apocalyptic Texts and an Historical Introduction*, eds. A. P a l m e r, S. B r o c k, R. H o y l a n d, Liverpool 1993, p. 755sq.

⁶⁷ K.B. W o l f, *Introduction*, [in:] *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain*, ed., transl. i d e m, Liverpool 1999, p. XVsq; i d e m, *Chronicle 754*, [in:] *Medieval Iberia. Readings from Christian, Muslim and Jewish Sources*, ed. O.R. C o n s t a b l e, Philadelphia 1997, p. 29.

⁶⁸ D.J. S a h a s, *John of Damascus on Islam*, Leiden 1972; A. L o u t h, *St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology*, Oxford 2005.

⁶⁹ O. J u r e w i c z, *Historia...*, pp. 100–103.

territories requires an extensive use of inscriptions (especially the collection *Les inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie*) and, which is natural in this case, legal sources. Another important group of documents are the lists of the cities and provinces, represented by such works as *Synekdemos* by Hierocles, *Description of the Roman world* (*Descriptio orbis romani*) attributed to George of Cyprus or *Christianiké topographía* by Cosmas Indicopleustes⁷⁰.

Only upon collecting the data from all said sources we can make out a relatively complete picture of the relations between Byzantium and its Arab neighbours from sixth to mid-eight century.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*.

Abbreviations



AAAS	Annales Archeologiques Arabes Syriennes
AAE	Arabian Archeology and Epigraphy
AASS	<i>Acta sanctorum</i> , vol. I–LXIII, Paris 1863–1940
AB	Analecta Bollandiana
ABC. SB	Acta Biologica Cracoviensia. Series Botanica
ABH	Acta Botanica Hungarica
ABY	Archäologische Berichte aus dem Yemen
ACO	<i>Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum</i>
ACr	Analecta Cracoviensia
Ae	Aevum. Rassegna di scienze storiche, linguistiche e filologiche
AEt	Annales d’Ethiopie
AEu	Acta Euroasiatica
AHC	Annuario Historiae Conciliorum
AHL	Archaeology and History in Lebanon
AHR	The American Historical Review
AHSt	Analecta Hierosolimitikes Stachiologias
AIsl	Ars Islamica
AJA	American Journal of Archaeology
AJISS	American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences
AnC	Antigüedad y Cristianismo

And	Al-Andalus
ANES	Ancient Near Eastern Studies
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> , vol. I, <i>Von den Anfängen Roms bis zum Ausgang der Republik</i> , Bd. I–IV, ed. H. Temporini, New York–Berlin 1972–1973; vol. II, <i>Principat</i> , Bd. I–XXXVII, eds. H. Temporini, W. Haase, New York–Berlin 1974–.
AOr	Ars Orientalis
Ara	Arabica
ARAM	ARAM. Society for Syro-Mesopotamian Studies
Arb	Arabia
ArchRev	The Architectural Review
ARev	Asiatic Review
Art	Arteria
ArtB	The Art Bulletin: a quarterly published by the College Art Association of America
ARw	Archiv für Religionswissenschaft
ATa	Antiquité tardive
AUL.FH	Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Historica
B	Byzantion
Ba	Baal
BALAC	Bulletin d'ancienne littérature et d'archéologie chrétienne
BASOR	Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research
BCH	Bulletin de correspondance hellénique
BEO	Bulletin d'Études Orientales
BF	Byzantinische Forschungen. Internationale Zeitschrift für Byzantinistik
BMB	Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth
BMGS	Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies
BNum	Biuletyn Numizmatyczny
Bsl	Byzantinoslavica. Revue internationale des études byzantines
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
BSOS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, University of London
Byz	Byzantina / Βυζαντινά. Ἐπιστημονικό Ὅργανο Κέντρου Βυζαντινῶν Ἑρευνῶν Ἀριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου
ByzS	Byzantine Studies/Études byzantines
BZ	Byzantinische Zeitschrift
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CChO	Collectanea Christiana Orientalia
CCM	Cahiers de civilisation médiévale, X ^e –XII ^e siècles
CDCS	<i>Cambridge Dictionary of Classical Civilisation</i> , eds. G. Shipley, J. Vanderpool, D. Mattingly, Cambridge 2006

ChH	Church History
ChrV	Christianskij Vostok / Христианский Восток
CRAIBL	Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et Belles-Lettres
CSCO	<i>Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium</i>
CTu	Les Cahiers de Tunisie
DArch	Les Dossiers d'Archéologie
DM	Damaszener Mitteilungen
DOP	Dumbarton Oaks Papers
DR	The Downside Review. A Quarterly Journal Published by the Monks of Downside Abbey
DSP	<i>Dokumenty soborów powszechnych</i>
E	Eos. Commentarii Societatis Philologiae Polonorum
EEBS	<i>Epeteris Hetaireias Byzantinon Spoudon</i> / <i>Επετηρίς Εταιρείας Βυζαντινών Σπουδών</i>
EKB	<i>Encyklopedia kultury bizantyńskiej</i> , ed. O. Jurawicz, Warszawa 2002
EHR	English Historical Review
EI	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> (Leiden–London, 1960–2005, 2007–)
Ele	Electrum
EO	Échos d'Orient
EPh	Ekklesiastikos Pharos
ERev	The Ecumenical Review
ETL	Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses
FF	Forschungen und Fortschritte
FHC	Folia Historica Cracoviensia
FHG	<i>Fragmenta historicorum graecorum</i> , ed. C. Müller, vol. I–V, Paris 1841–1870
FR	Felix Ravenna
GA	Graeco-Arabica
GOTR	Greek Orthodox Theological Review, The
GRBS	Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies
Ha	The Harp
HeC	L'Hellenism contemporain
HeyJ	The Heythrop Journal
Hi	Historia. Zeitschrift für alte Geschichte
HSCP	Harvard Studies in Classical Philology
HTR	The Harvard Theological Review
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
HUS	Harvard Ukrainian Studies
HZ	Historische Zeitschrift
IEJ	Israel Exploration Journal

IGLS	<i>Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie</i> , eds. L. Jalabert, R. Mouterde, C. Mondésert, Paris 1929–1970
IJNA	The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology
IQ	The Islamic Quarterly
Ir	Irénikon. Quarterly Journal Published by the Monks of Chevetogne
Isl	Der Islam
Islch	Islamochristiana
IslSt	Islamic Studies
Istn	Istina
Ita	Italica
JA	Journal asiatique
JAC	Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum
JAEBL	Qadmoniot. Journal for the Antiquities of Eretz-Israel and Bible Lands
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JCopS	Journal of Coptic Studies
JeAr	Jewish Art
J ECS	Journal of Early Christian Studies
JEH	Journal of Ecclesiastical History
JEaCS	Journal of Eastern Christian Studies
JESHO	Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient
JHS	Journal of Hellenic Studies
JIS	Journal of Islamic Studies
JLA	Journal of Late Antiquity
JMGS	Journal of Modern Greek Studies
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JÖB	Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik
JPOS	Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society
JRA	Journal of Roman Archaeology
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
JRS	Journal of Roman Studies
JSAH	Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians
JS AI	Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam
JSyS	Hugoye. Journal of Syriac Studies
JTS	The Journal of Theological Studies
K	Klio. Beiträge zur alten Geschichte
KH	Kwartalnik Historyczny
KO	Kunst des Orients
KWT.UMK	Teologia i Człowiek. Kwartalnik Wydziału Teologicznego UMK

LAn	Liber Annus
M	Meander. Rocznik poświęcony kulturze świata starożytnego (1946–1996 Meander. Miesięcznik poświęcony kulturze świata starożytnego; 1997–2004 Meander. Dwumiesięcznik poświęcony kulturze świata starożytnego; 2005–2012 Meander. Kwartalnik poświęcony kulturze świata starożytnego)
Man	Mediterraneo antico
MDAI.AK	Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts. Abteilung Kairo
MeEn	Medieval Encounters. Jewish, Christian and Muslim Culture in Confluence and Dialogue
MeMe	Mésogéios-Méditerranée
MGH.AA	<i>Monumenta Germaniae historica, Auctores antiquissimi</i>
MGH.SS	<i>Monumenta Germaniae historica, Scriptores</i>
MHE	Miscellanea Historiae Ecclesiasticae
Mil	Millennium. Jahrbuch zu Kultur und Geschichte des ersten Jahrtausends n. Chr. / Yearbook on the Culture and History of the First Millennium C.E.
MLFP	Modern Languages Faculty Publications
Msla	Le Monde slave
MSNAF	Mémoires de la Société nationale des antiquaires de France
Mu	Le Muséon
Muq	Muqarnas. An Annual on the Visual Cultures of the Islamic World
MUSJ	Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph, Beirut
MWo	The Moslem World
NCB	New College Bulletin
Nu	Nubica
OCh	Oriens Christianus. Hefte für die Kunde des christlichen Orients
OCP	Orientalia Christiana Periodica
ODB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium</i> , ed. A. Kazhdan, New York–Oxford 1991
OS	L'Orient syrien
OSu	Orientalia Suecana
PAM	Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean
Par	Parnassos / Παρνασσός
PCBE	<i>Prosopographie Chrétienne du Bas-Empire</i> , Roma 1982–
PEQ	Palestine Exploration Quarterly
PG	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris 1857–1866
PH	Przegląd Historyczny
PL	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus, Series latina</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris 1844–1880
PLRE	<i>The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> , vol. I, <i>A.D. 260–395</i> , eds. A.H.M. Jones, J.R. Martindale, J. Morris, Cambridge 1971

	vol. II, <i>A.D. 395–527</i> , ed. J.R. Martindale, Cambridge 1980
	vol. III, <i>A.D. 527–641</i> , ed. J.R. Martindale, Cambridge 1992
PO	<i>Patrologia orientalis</i>
POr	Parole de l'Orient
Por	Porphyra
POrient	Przegląd Orientalistyczny
PP	Past and Present: A Journal of Historical Studies
PPSb	Pravoslavnyj Palestinskij Sbornik / Православный Палестинский сборник
PR	Przegląd Religioznawczy
PS	<i>Patrologia syriaca</i> , ed. R. Graffin, Paris 1894–1926
PSAS	Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies
PZH	Piotrkowskie Zeszyty Historyczne
QREA	Al-Qantara Revista de Estudios Arabes
RB	Revue biblique
RE	<i>Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> , eds. G. Wissowa, W. Kroll, Stuttgart 1894–1978
REB	Revue des études byzantines
REG	Revue des études grecques
REI	Revue des études islamiques
Rel	Religion
RH	Revue historique
RHE	Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique
RHR	Revue de l'histoire des religions
RIBLA	Revue de l'Institut des belles-lettres arabes
RIDA	Revue internationale des droits de l'Antiquité
RKult	Roczniki kulturoznawcze
RMPH.NF	Rheinischen Museum für Philologie. Neue Folge
ROC	Revue de l'Orient chrétien
RSI	Rivista storica italiana
RSO	Rivista degli studi orientali
RSR	Revue des sciences religieuses
RTK	Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne
RTL	Revue théologique de Louvain
RTNW	Rocznik Towarzystwa Naukowego Warszawskiego
SAI	Studia Arabistyczne i Islamistyczne
SCH	Studies in Church History
Sem	Seminare. Poszukiwania Naukowe
Si	Signs

SJT	The Scottish Journal of Theology
StHAJ	Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan
STHSO	Studia Teologiczno-Historyczne Śląska Opolskiego
StI	Studia Islamica
StPatr	Studia Patristica
StPB	Studia patristica et Byzantina
STV	Studia Theologica Varsaviensia
StZHistUJ	Studenckie Zeszyty Historyczne Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego
SUFED	Sakarya Üniversitesi Fen Edebiyat Dergisi
SvEA	Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok
Sy	Syria. Archéologie, art et histoire
Sym	Symmeikta / Συμμεικτα
Taw	Al-Tawhīd
TM	Travaux et mémoires du Centre de recherches d'histoire et civilisation byzantines
TPAPA	Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association
Ty	Tyche. Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte, Papyrologie und Epigraphik
USS	U Schyłku Starożytności. Studia Źródłoznawcze
VC	Vigiliae christianae: A Review of Early Christian Life and Language
VP	Vox Patrum. Antyk Chrześcijański
VV	Vizantijskij vremennik / Византийский временник
WDr	W Drodze
WH	War in History
ZAC	Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum / Journal of Ancient Christianity
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft
ZDPV	Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins
ZNW	Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche [/ des Urchristentums]
ZPE	Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik
ZRVI	Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta / Сборник Радова Византолошког Института
ZSSR.RA	Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Romanistische Abteilung
ŽNDS	Damaskin. Žurnal Nižegorodskoj duchovnoj seminarii / Дамаскин. Журнал Нижегородской духовной семинарии
n.d.	no date
n.p.	no place

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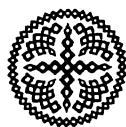
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Paweł Filipczak

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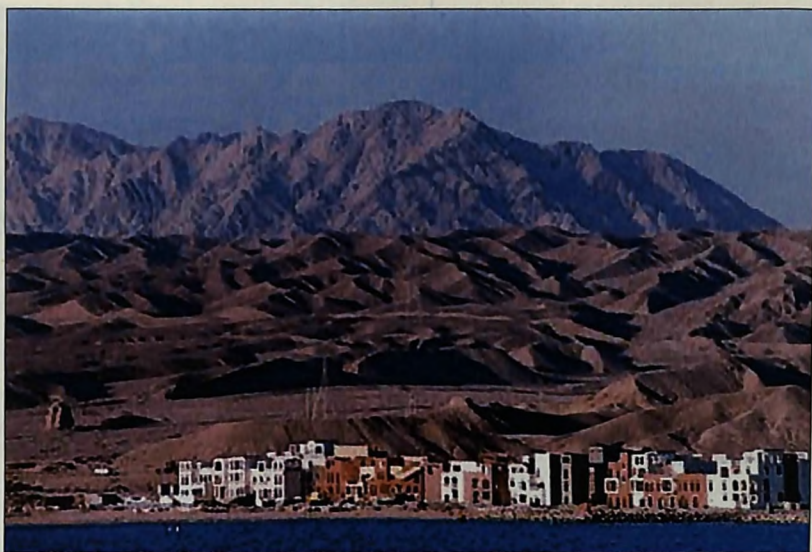
(7-8, 14-15, 20, 27-29, 38-39)

Marta Woźniak

(40-45)

Text by

Paweł Filipczak



1. Baqir Mountains (Jabal Bāqir), Jordan. A mountain ridge above the Gulf of Aqaba surrounds the city from the east and north-east. The east bank of Jordan River is situated north of the ridge.



2. Sea coast at Sidon (Ṣaydā, Lebanon) with a thirteenth-century castle with granite columns from the Roman times, used to reinforce the construction. Columns like these were often used in Crusaders' castles of the Middle East.



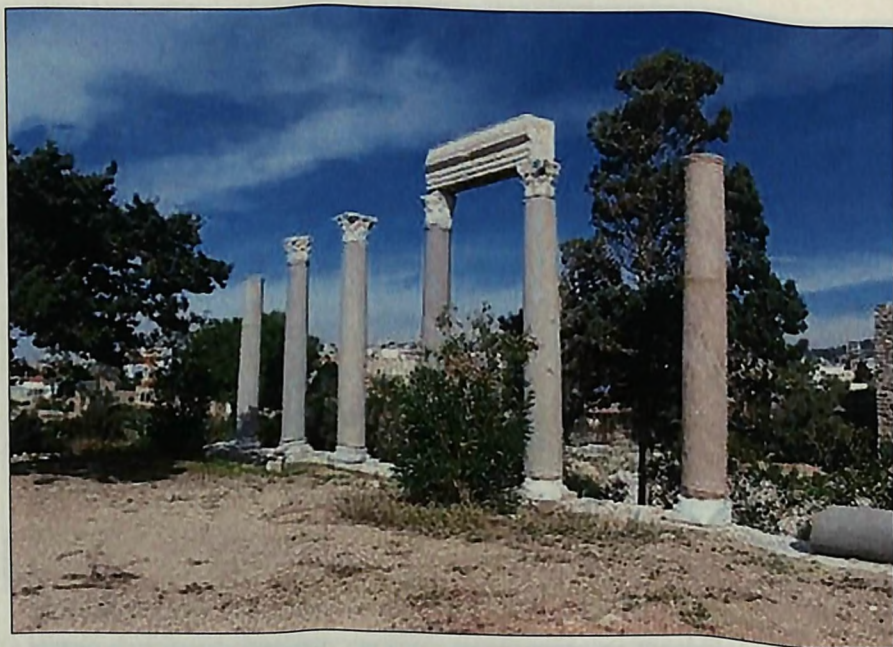
3. Bostra (Buṣrā al-Shām), Syria. The city of Bostra was once the capital of the Byzantine province of Arabia. A Roman theatre of the second century A.D., rebuilt and fortified in the fifth and sixth century, from the mid-thirteenth century used as a fortress. Basalt blocs give it a distinctive, dark look.



4. Gerasa (Djarash), Jordan. A rare oval forum, dated – like a temple of Zeus in the bottom part of the photo – to the first and second century AD, surrounded by a colonnade. Parts of a water supply system, which was still used as late as in the seventh century, have survived in the centre of the forum. Gerasa was captured by the Arabs in 636 and destroyed in the earthquake of 749.



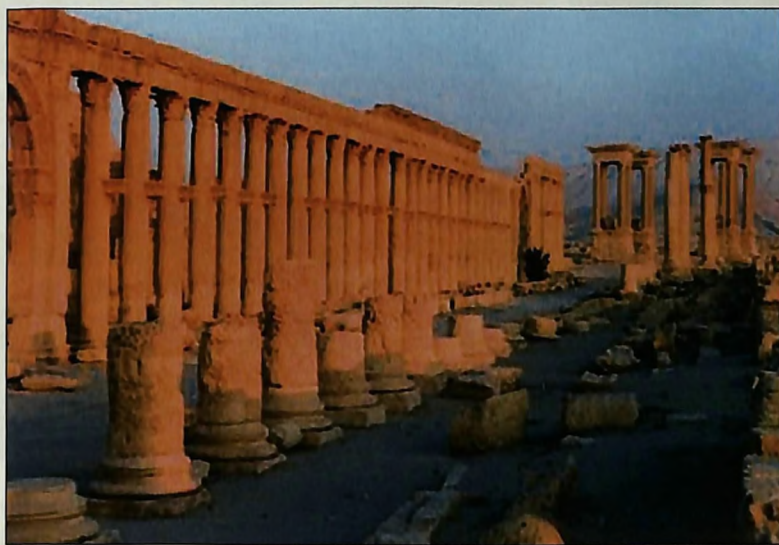
5–6. Tyre (Şūr), Lebanon, the capital city of the province of Phoenicia (*Phoenice Paralia*). An important ecclesiastic centre; place of the synods of 355 and 513 and an important place of commerce and craftsmanship. Seriously damaged in the earthquakes of 501 and 551 and rebuilt; seized by the Arabs ca. 638. A number of Byzantine sarcophagi have survived in the Al-Bass district (a cross and part of inscription can be seen on the photo). In the district of Al-Mînā there is a well-preserved Roman street with a colonnade and remains of a Byzantine floor mosaic.



7–8. Byblos (Djubayl). In the Roman times Byblos was a small town, less important than Tyre or Sidon, but thanks to a harbour it became an important trade centre. The colonnade and theatre are dated to the early third century AD. The theatre has been reconstructed in ca. 1/3 of its original size and moved from its original location to give access to older archaeological layers. From the fourth century AD Byblos was the seat of a bishopric. The capture of the city by Arabs in ca. 636 did not put a stop to its normal course of life.



9. Apamea (Afāmiya, Syria). The capital of the province of *Syria Secunda*, one of the biggest cities of Syro-Palestine. The photo shows the main street (*cardo maximus*), flanked by columns with distinctive spiral grooves (second half of second century). The city was destroyed in an earthquake in the first half of sixth century and rebuilt by emperor Justinian. Occupied and looted by Persia in 612–628, it was captured by the Arabs in 636.



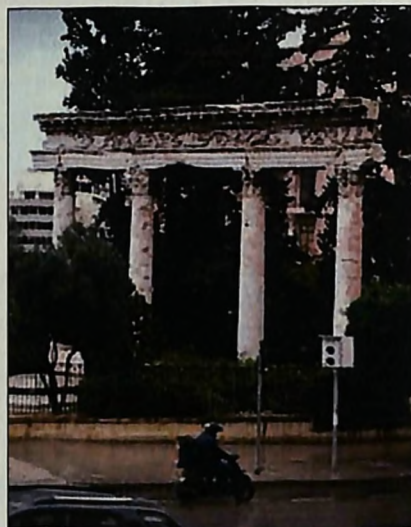
10. Palmyra (Tadmur, Syria). Part of the so-called Great Colonnade, the main street, leading from the Grand Arch to a *tetrapylon* seen in the background. North-west of it there was emperor Diocletian's camp. The monumental buildings of Palmyra were devastated between fourth and sixth century. Justinian rebuilt city walls; the city was a military fortress up to Heraclius' times. Captured by Arabs in 634.



11. Beirut (Lebanon). Roman *thermae* with sub-floor heating (*hypocaustum*) excavated in the centre.



12. Beirut. Colonnade at *cardo maximus* – the main street of the city in the Roman and Byzantine era. One of the few remains of that time. The city was almost totally destroyed in the earthquake of 551. Rebuilt some time later, it was captured by the Arabs in 635. In the Umayyad period the city was a small but important harbour.



13. Beirut. Columns with a richly decorated architrave. Excavated 1946 in the centre of the city (Place de l'Étoile), where in the Roman times there probably was a forum. Today the columns stand in front of the National Museum.



14–15. Beirut. St. George Cathedral of the Greek Orthodox Church. In 1994–1997 archaeologists from the American University of Beirut excavated Byzantine mosaics in the church basement.



16. Beirut. National Museum. A mosaic, dated to the fifth or sixth century AD, found in the southern suburbs of the city, depicting Jesus the Good Shepherd, surrounded by animals. The mosaic was partly damaged during the Lebanese civil war (1975–1990).



17–18. Petra (Jordan). Floor mosaics, showing Christian symbols and mythological figures from the so-called Byzantine Church, built in the late fifth century, redecorated in mid-sixth and destroyed in the early seventh century.



19. Mādaba (Jordan). A mid-seventh century floor mosaic from the Church of St. George, with a map of the Middle East.



20. Faqra, Lebanon. In the upper parts of Mt. Lebanon, at about 1550 m above sea level there are imposing ruins of pagan temples, devoted probably to Adonis and Astarte. In the late Roman Empire, most probably in the fourth century, a church was built in the ruins. A nave with the adjacent rooms and a stone with an encircled cross have survived until today.



21. Qaşr ibn Wardān (60 km north-west of Hama), Syria. Ruins of a church from ca. 564 – part of a fortified checkpoint (with a palace and barracks) on the Byzantine-Arab border.



22. Qaşr ibn Wardān. A Greek inscription on a dark basalt stone in the lintel of a one of the buildings.



23–24. Natron Valley (Wādī al-Naṭrūn), Egypt. A big monastic centre between today's Cairo and Alexandria. In the photo there is the Monastery of St. Paisios, founded in the fourth century. Thick walls, small windows and other defensive parts should provide security during raids of Arab nomads.



25–26. Natron Valley. A Syriac monastery founded in the sixth (according to some sources in the fourth) century. The monastery, raided by the Arabs, was rebuilt in the mid-ninth century.



27–29. Bait al-Dīn, Lebanon. A palace of Emir Bashir Shihab II (eighteenth/ nineteenth century) has a huge collection of early Byzantine mosaics, most of which were found in villages by the sea or in Mount Lebanon, in Jiyeh (ancient Porphyron), Bait Mari, Zahrani and Ansar.



30. *Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt* (30 km north-east of Amman), Jordan. A castle from the first half of eighth century, built by caliph Al-Malik, in the place of a Roman military camp.



31. *Qaṣr Ḥammām al-Ṣarakh* (30 km north-east of Amman), Jordan. Umayyad baths. You can see the remains of the heating system (*caldarium*).



32. Qasr 'Amra (50 km north-east of Amman), Jordan. One of desert castles; a tri-nave construction with a barrel vault, composed of a reception room and *thermae*, built by caliph Al-Walid in the first half of the eighth century.



33. Qasr 'Amra. A wall painting on the vault of *caldarium*, depicting the northern sky with the signs of the zodiac.



34. Qasr Azraq, Jordan. A fortress of black basalt, in the Roman times known as Basienis (100 km north-east of Amman). Built by the Romans to control the border, was later used by the Byzantines and Umayyads as well. Rebuilt in the present form in the first half of the thirteenth century.



35. Amman (ancient Philadelphia), Jordan. The palace of the Umayyads. Built in the mid-eighth century by caliph Hishām. Some parts of the building remind the Taq Kasra – the monumental palace ensemble in Ctesiphon, the capital city of Sassanid-era Persia.



36. Kaşr Kharāna (50 km east of Amman), Jordan. A fortress on the plan of a square, surrounded by walls of brick and stone, built by Al-Walīd in the first half of eighth century.



37. Kaşr Kharāna. Persian architectural patterns. A room with arches resting on in-built columns.



38. 'Andjar, Lebanon. The Great Palace, the biggest residence of Umayyad caliphs, discovered during the archaeological excavations in 1949. The walls and arches have been reconstructed.



39. 'Andjar. The city was built in the early eighth century (probably during the reign of Al-Walīd or Al-Abbas), on a rectangular plan, surrounded by walls and with the Roman streets plan. The city was intersected by the two crossing streets (*cardo* and *decumanus maximus*). Inhabited during a few decades, it was abandoned most probably in the same eighth century.



40. Damascus, Syria. The Umayyad Mosque, built 706–715 by Al-Walid and Al-Malik in the place of the Basilica of John the Baptist (erected on the ruins of the former temple of Jupiter in the fourth century AD). The photo depicts the House of Treasury, founded in 789. It is possible that the *Bayt al-Māl* was located there during the reign of the Umayyads.



41. Damascus, Syria. The Umayyad Mosque. According to the tradition which dates back to the Byzantine era, the head of John the Baptist was kept in a small chapel of the main hall.



42. Jerusalem, Israel. Dome on the Rock. A shrine on the Temple Mount, built in the late seventh century during the reign of Al-Malik, in the place where Muḥammad is believed to have had a revelation known as *al-Mi'rāj* (ascension). A view from the Western Wall, also known as the Wailing Wall, the only preserved part of the Second Temple of Jerusalem, destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. The existing part of the wall, however, was erected in the late first century BC during the construction works in the times of Herod the Great.



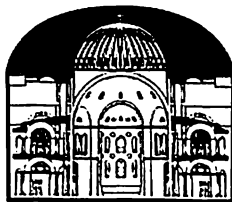
43. Jerusalem. Al-Aḳṣā mosque. Erected on the Temple Mount in the vicinity of the Dome on the Rock to commemorate *al-'Isrā'*, or Muḥammad's revelation, during which he rode on his steed, *Burāq* to "the farthest mosque" in Jerusalem.



44. St. Catherine Monastery (Daīr al-Qiddīsa Kātrīnā), Sinai, Egypt. Erected in the mountain area of southern Sinai, in a valley at the foot of Mount St. Catherine. Emperor Justinian had the walls built to protect the monastery from nomadic raids. He also ordered a basilica to be erected in the place where earlier there was the Chapel of the Burning Bush. In the seventh century the monastery was granted special privileges by Muslims. By Muḥammad's own decision the monastery was exempt from taxes.



45. Cairo, Egypt. The Coptic Orthodox Church of St. Virgin Mary (known also as the "Hanging Church" or Al-Mu'allaka). Built probably at the end of the seventh century, in the place of an older Christian temple, which may have come from the end of the third century. The two bell towers were added as late as in the nineteenth century.



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1997–2015

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Sławomir Bralewski, *Imperatorzy późnego cesarstwa rzymskiego wobec zgromadzeń biskupów*, Łódź 1997, ss. 197.

[*Les empereurs du Bas-Empire romain face aux conciles des évêques*]

II.

Maciej Kokoszko, *Descriptions of Personal Appearance in John Malalas' Chronicle*, Łódź 1998, ss. 181.

III.

Mélanges d'histoire byzantine offerts à Oktawiusz Jurewicz à l'occasion de Son soixante-dixième anniversaire, red. **Waldemar Ceran**, Łódź 1998, ss. 209.

IV.

Mirosław Jerzy Leszka, *Uzurpacje w cesarstwie bizantyńskim w okresie od IV do połowy IX wieku*, Łódź 1999, ss. 149.

[*Usurpations in Byzantine Empire from the 4th to the Half of the 9th Century*]

V.

Małgorzata Beata Leszka, *Rola duchowieństwa na dworze cesarzy wczesnobizantyńskich*, Łódź 2000, ss. 136.

[*The Role of the Clergy at the Early Byzantine Emperors Court*]

VI.

Waldemar Ceran, *Historia i bibliografia rozumowana bizantynologii polskiej (1800-1998)*, tom I–II, Łódź 2001, ss. 786.

[*History and bibliography raisonné of Polish byzantinology (1800–1998)*]

VII.

Mirosław Jerzy Leszka, *Wizerunek władców pierwszego państwa bułgarskiego w bizantyńskich źródłach pisanych (VIII – pierwsza połowa XII wieku)*, Łódź 2003, ss. 169.

[*The Image of the First Bulgarian State Rulers Shown in the Byzantine Literary Sources of the Period from the VIIIth to the First Half of the XIIth Centuries*]

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Teresa Wolińska, *Sycylia w polityce cesarstwa bizantyńskiego w VI-IX wieku*, Łódź 2005, ss. 379.

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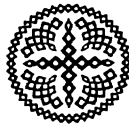
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